

DOUGLAS K. WATSON

Interviewed by: Thomas J. Dunnigan

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Q: This is Tom Dunnigan and the date is January 10, 2000. Today, I will be talking with Douglas Watson, who spent almost 30 years in the Foreign Service. He served on four continents in some extremely interesting places. Doug, let's begin with your telling me something of your background and what brought you into the Foreign Service.

WATSON: Indeed. I am 64 now. I've been married to my wife, Evelyn, for some 42 years. We have two daughters, 41 and 38, who enjoyed our Foreign Service experience during their earlier years.

I was born in Montana. My mother and father both were working with the National Park Service at Yellowstone National Park, having previously worked at Yosemite. We moved to the Washington, DC area, to Arlington, Virginia, in 1936. I grew up in Arlington, Virginia. I had a very successful high school athletic career after stumbling through a pretty bad juvenile delinquent period. I then went on to California to pursue a University of California football scholarship, initially for a year at Sacramento Junior College. I gave up on that quickly and went into theater work. That is where I met my wife, who was an excellent professional dancer. After a short while I left the theater business, since I had to work to make steady money. I worked with the post office and also held other part-time and sometimes seasonal jobs. I began to go to college part time, first at Los Angeles State College, which later became California State College, which later became California State University at Los Angeles. Owing to a variety of circumstances, my wife and I both became interested in civil rights issues, largely relating to African-Americans, but also as these issues related to the Hispanic community, predominantly Mexican, in the Los Angeles area. That simply stimulated our interest further in national issues and then international issues, and most specifically, Mexico and the Spanish language.

Once upon a time, for reasons that now escape me, I was looking up the Foreign Service in the periodical guide to literature there at the university library and stumbled across it, that's how it really happened. I looked into that and indeed decided to pursue a bachelor's degree in international relations with a concentration in international administration. I read a few books on the Foreign Service and I was aware how difficult the Foreign Service written exam was, and then the oral exam process. I took the written exam when I was 29 to give myself a couple of years to take it a second and/or third time, since in those days the entry age limit was 31. Lo and behold, I passed the written exam. I passed it with a very low score. I never told anyone that I had passed with a score of 72, thinking that everyone else probably scored 90 or so. Of course, over time, I learned that that was not the case. As a matter of fact, one of the more interesting things I did in 1977 when I was in personnel work in the Department, consisted of a study of written exam scores as these relate to "success" in the Foreign Service. So, I looked at all Foreign Service officers who had entered through the exam process and who were "worldwide available" that is, Tenure Code #1. I looked at all officers who had entered since 1945 up to and including all those who had been in the Foreign Service at least 10 years at the time of the study, taking a look at their written exam score as it related to "success" that is, promotion up over time in the Foreign Service. I undertook the study in part because of our concern for affirmative action, both the mid-level program and also the entry level affirmative action programs. I believed from my experience that success in the Foreign Service didn't necessarily reside simply in how "smart" you were, how well you did in the written exam. There were many other skills involved, some of which were very difficult to measure as a part of an entry exam process. Anyway, in looking at the overall written exam study population, I divided that population into three groups: an average moving group (that is, an average rate of promotion up over time), a slower moving group, and a faster moving group. I can't remember the numbers of individuals in each group, but each of the three groups numbered in the several hundreds. I found that the slower moving group scored an average of 75.1 on the written exam, the average group scored 76.1, and the fast group scored 76.5. Statistically the written exam score alone was not a predictor of "success," faster upward progress, in the Foreign Service.

So, back to your question, an interesting experience, my oral examination. I remember the three panelists quite well, three white men, one from USIA, one an economist who had also worked a fair amount of time with AID, and one a very patrician State political officer, most austere. One of the questions they asked after I stumbled through a number of oral responses-ducking things like the Huk uprising in the Philippines, about which I had very little information-as the interview drew to a close, the economic gentleman, the panel chairman, asked me why it was that with my rather mixed and somewhat "flamboyant background" (his words), having worked in acting and many other enterprises, I had come to the oral examination dressed in such a conservative grey suit and tie. I replied, "Well, I came prepared for this examination or for a funeral." That lighthearted comment brought laughter and banter, and seemed to have won their approval. Anyway, to make a long story short, there was in the outer office what was called in those days a "Kelly girl," a secretary transcribing notes, typing. I was sitting next to her waiting for the finding of the panel, not feeling all that optimistic. The chairman came out and said, "The panel was split, Mr. Watson, two to one, however, we favor continuation of your candidacy. We also suggest that you study more economics." That was a real eye opener. So, I did pass. Later, upon being asked to accept an appointment, I asked to have a deferment for a year while I pursued a graduate degree at the University of Florida in Latin American studies. The Board of Examiners' response was somewhat along the lines of, "Come now while you're on the register or you might just as well forget it."

So, we came, my wife and two daughters and I, tooling across the south of the United States in a brand new Volkswagen Squareback, which we had ordered directly from West Germany specifically for our Foreign Service beginning. I entered in August of 1966, along with 59 other Officers. Ten were USIA. Forty four were State and six more were State "Staff Officers" who were being "Mustanged" into the Foreign Service through the Officer program. The Junior Officer program was headed up by Alex Davit and Ralph Jones, two gentlemen of distinct managerial approaches, and different personalities. I enjoyed this training experience. I felt, frankly, uneducated compared to the academic polish and laurels which so many of my colleagues seemed to have. I was, at age 31, the next oldest Foreign Service Officer in that class. The youngest was 21, a brand new Georgetown University graduate. There were a couple of others near my age. The training from my perspective was quite good, but in the opinions of so many others in my class, uneven at best. They were not impressed, perhaps due to their having been exposed generally to better training and education than I had been. The person who directed our consular training, a rigorous two weeks, but fun (this was on the heels of the five or six weeks Foreign Service general training) was a woman by the name of Alice Curran, whom I'll not forget, and whom we privately referred to as "Mad Alice." She was quite a taskmaster, very serious. I learned a great deal. Arriving at our first post, Cairo, that consular training served me very well for the more routine aspects of consular work, and gave me some insights into the less routine aspects, such as our evacuation from Egypt consequent to the 1967 "Six Day War."

Q: Doug, did you get any other training besides your basic training? Did they give you any area or language training before you went to Cairo?

WATSON: Yes. I had asked for assignment either to Mexico (my first choice), Bolivia (my second choice) or Spain. I was instead assigned to Cairo, which gave me and my wife some pause. As a matter of fact, the gentleman who was my counselor in the Junior Officer Division, Fred Day, the Friday before I was to have gone into French language training for Cairo (since they wouldn't assign you Arabic training unless you were a "demonstrated" language learner), called me and said they would instead like me to go to the Arabic language school in Beirut, and to study Arabic for two years, which gave us even more pause. That wasn't really down my alley; I had had Spanish and Latin America in mind. We had resigned ourselves to go to Cairo, and first to study French. So I said to Fred, who was a wonderful fellow, something along the lines of "No, I won't do that. It doesn't make any sense." He said, "Well, your language aptitude is very high," which it happened to have been for that famous test, the MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test), where I had simply had a good morning and scored high on the test.

So, off, indeed, we went to French language training, 16 weeks of it. Unlike most language learners, at training's end I scored higher on the verbal than I did on the reading and translation portion of the examination. At the end of those 16 weeks, with a 78 MLAT on the scale of 80, I earned a three in speaking, but only a two plus in reading. Consequently, I would have to continue French language training in Cairo.

We had quite an arrival in Cairo, a city and country I really hadn't been quite prepared for. I felt when we debarked at the airport that I was indeed in a foreign country. It was a marvelous first overseas experience. Driving in from the airport, night just having fallen, with the embassy driver and our welcomer, FSO Jim Robb, whom I remember well and favorably, describing the sights and scenes of Cairo, amidst crazy, careening, honking traffic. We stayed at the Hilton Hotel for two nights on El Tahrir Square, not far from the Semiramis Hotel and not far at all from the embassy, then located in the Garden City section of Cairo.

Q: This must have been in late 1966 or early 1967.

WATSON: We arrived in March of 1967. My tour lasted just 12 weeks to the day. We evacuated mission families owing to the Six Day War at about ten weeks after our arrival. Many of us stayed on another two weeks, a core staff, including relatively junior officers.

Q: What did they have you doing when you arrived?

WATSON: I went right into the Consular Section and was taken in hand by the Foreign Service national staff, which then numbered only four, and whom I thought were very good. Of course, they would appear so to such a novice. They knew so much more than I did and would help me avoid egregious errors, and would correct my mistakes. As things over the weeks fell apart in Cairo, consular activity increased. I was tasked to do a number of additional chores having to do with burning classified materials along with the Marines, and helping out in various locations throughout the city, traveling with a young Egyptian Army captain helping to find American citizens, to inform them, and to help them gather at one or two central locations so that when we departed Cairo on the night train to Alexandria, they would be as well prepared as possible.

Q: Your departure was before the war started?

WATSON: Oh, no, we were well into the war. Israeli air strikes were being made at the Heliopolis Airport and elsewhere. Israeli Mirages, if I remember correctly, were buzzing the city. A number of us got together in the apartment where I and my family had been temporarily located, eating everything we possibly could from our various homes, because we saw the departure imminently coming. There were a number of Foreign Service Officers there at that time who later went on to have successful careers, some Arabists in the group, and Arabic language speakers, of course, who would inform me that the news on Egyptian radio was not at all accurate regarding the number of Israeli planes which had been destroyed, and other matters. As the people took to the streets with chants of "Nasser," we all were concerned. But on balance we were well enough protected by the Egyptian Government.

Q: Do you think there was anti U.S. feeling there at the time? Of course, we were known to be friendly to Israel.

WATSON: From my distant remove, as a new Officer in the Consular Section (actually, the third Officer, as there were only three Americans in the section), yes, I had the impression that there was hostility. Of course, Foreign Service nationals never evinced that because they were a part of the U.S. mission, the team, the shared effort, if you will. I did have a chance during that brief tour to make a couple of classified pouch runs up the Nile by train to Alexandria. That the Department evacuated family members about two weeks prior to the outbreak of hostilities was a wise decision. The families were well seen after in Athens, to which we were all eventually evacuated from Cairo. If there was a flaw in the family evacuations it was simply that we were not able to be in touch from Cairo personally with our families in Athens during that two week separation. But when you measure that against the possible situation had they stayed, their evacuation was really very positive and well managed.

Q: An off the point question: did we have a consulate in Alexandria at the time or had we closed it?

WATSON: Yes, we had a Consulate General in Alexandria and we had a Consulate in Port Said. One of the things that I did early the day prior to our evacuation, was to take a photograph of our embassy building with the seal of the United States over the front portico with the Spanish flag raised over the embassy, as the Government of Spain was protecting our interests. I took another photograph as we loaded the baggage up the ramps and gangplanks of the Greek ship on which we departed. Both photos appeared in the State Department magazine. The U.S. government had chartered a Greek vessel to transport us from Alexandria to Piraeus, Greece, the port for Athens.

Q: I wanted to ask you whether the U.S. Navy played any part in this.

WATSON: None of which I was then aware, although my understanding is that they offered some protection at least near the port as the Greek ship arrived and departed with us aboard. There were also at least a couple of Soviet ships in the Alexandria harbor at the same time we were leaving. The Egyptian train authorities had cautioned us to draw our window curtains as we came into Alexandria on the train. As we slowly rolled into the Alexandria train station, and opened the shades that early morning, maybe 6:00 A.M., there were many Egyptians shouting and waving their arms as we rolled in. They did not appear happy. I remember a number of protesters with their shoes on their hands, above their heads, the shoe soles facing us.

Q: It was an unfriendly group.

WATSON: It was an unfriendly group. As we boarded the ship, a number of the Egyptian port personnel, some in military uniform, were very gruff with private U.S. civilians. One Egyptian port official was being very rude to a woman, a private American citizen, regarding her baggage and her papers. I was able to assist exercising some presence and authority, and persuaded the Egyptian official to treat her more reasonably and expeditiously.

Let me go back just very briefly to the French language. I tried to study French during the roughly 12 weeks that I was in Cairo, but the situation was absurd. I had no use for French whatsoever during my time there. Arabic would have been helpful, but I could speak only a few words. I missed a number of French lessons, not because I choose not to attend classes, but because there was consular work to be done. During this time, my first consular case of significance had to do with inventorying and disposing of all the effects of an American Foreign Service employee who had very recently died at post. By the time I had arrived, the remains had been returned to the United States, but I had to inventory the effects. That was an eye opener as to what consular work could include. Also, visiting an American prisoner in an Egyptian jail was another eye opener as well. An Egyptian jail was not a good place to be, certainly not for long.

Q: Not all the modern conveniences.

WATSON: Yes, that's correct.

As a family we did have a chance to do some touring around the immediate Cairo area during those first weeks. We got down to "old Cairo" and visited a Coptic church. We visited the "City of the Dead" and the archeological museum. We visited Maadi, where my older daughter briefly attended school, the Cairo American College. My wife became quite ill while in Cairo from intestinal problems, which were not all that unusual.

I walked across the Nile river daily to work at the embassy. We had been installed in Dokki, a suburb just across the Nile from the embassy location in the Garden City section of Cairo. There were Egyptians in gun emplacements on the bridge and I would be challenged as I passed across each morning. But we were very fortunate - our personal vehicle finally had arrived, and we had driven to a few spots. We had all of our shipment of boxes unpacked except one. We had a few things on the walls. When the family, and later I, were evacuated to Athens, lo and behold, our car came and nearly all our effects as well. Very few items were missing. So, we were really quite fortunate.

Q: Did you leave on that last day or were there still Americans there when you left?

WATSON: No, we all left on that day. There may have been other Americans who remained in country, private American citizens of whom I would not have been aware.

Q: But the official Americans.

WATSON: Oh, yes, we all left, except for one FSO working in liaison with the Egyptian authorities, and with the Spanish Embassy there, the Government of Spain protecting U.S. interests.

Q: But he would have been under the Spanish flag then.

WATSON: Yes, I suppose he would have been under the Spanish flag, but still credentialed as a U.S. Government official, however that might work. The voyage on a leased Greek vessel across the Mediterranean was very interesting. We gathered around the shortwave radios, and I was able to mingle with the DCM, and the chiefs of this and that section. That was substantial exposure for me. In sum the entire evacuation was an excellent learning experience for me and for out family.

I also found that there were those employees who responded to that crisis very well. Then there were others who just stayed hunkered down at home and out of the way, perhaps not as able to cope as others.

Q: Well, then you arrived in Athens as an evacuee. How were you received there and how were you treated?

WATSON: We were received very well. The ambassador to Athens at that time was Phillips Talbot. He met the ship as we docked in Piraeus. When I realized that the American ambassador was there to meet us, it just seemed very normal to me. How could he possibly not meet us? We had been through quite a trying situation. Along with our family members, we were ensconced in a hotel in an area north of Athens called Kifissia. We were well cared for by the embassy, which was of course understaffed for that kind of an evacuation; they were accommodating as well personnel, other evacuees, from U.S. embassies in the area.

I was put to work right away in the Embassy's Consular Section assisting with evacuees, both private and official Americans.

Q: Did you or any of the other evacuees expect to return to Cairo?

WATSON: I certainly did, but I didn't think about it. I was so dispensable compared with others who had a deeper investment, more value, there. So, when I was asked by Jean Farr, the then personnel officer at the Athens embassy, what my assignment duties were, Athens or elsewhere, not much understanding how the personnel system worked back in Washington, I said, "I'd like to go to Mexico, Bolivia or Spain." August (Gus) Velletri, who was the Labor attaché in Athens, took me aside and said, "Son, here you are in Athens. How many chances do you think you'll have during your checkered career to go to a place like Athens? If I were you and they offered me the option to stay here, I'd grab it." Taking his counsel, I told Jean Farr we would be happy to stay. So, they decided that what they would do is keep me there in the Consular Section for about six months, which along with the three months in Cairo would total my first nine months, and then for the latter nine months I would rotate to the Political Section. And indeed that is what happened. At the end of the Athens tour, I returned to Washington for some further training and an onward assignment. The Athens tour was a very good one. I had a chance to work with Peter (Pete) G. Peterson, who was the Consul General, a wonderful guy. He spoke Greek like a native, being of Greek ethnicity. I also worked for Lois Day, an excellent supervisor and helpful, who headed up the NIV section, and then for Bartlett Wells in the IV section. I worked with some phenomenal Foreign Service National personnel. The atmosphere in Greece was so friendly compared with what we had found during our brief stint in Cairo.

On the downside, I remember one American consular officer who had been in consular work for years. While I was with the IV section, this officer once came into my office fanning the air after a Greek family of modest means (from the Peloponnese, in the south of Greece) had left my office after the full interview process. They had perhaps not been as "fragrant" as this officer would have liked, but the officer came in waving papers as if fanning the odor from the room, and then came back in with a can of air spray and made some disparaging remarks about that class of people. A rude awakening for me. Foreign Service folks were just another slice of America.

I then had a chance to work in the Political Section. That was when King Constantine attempted a coup against the Greek military government.

Q: I might add that the coup was against Papadopoulos and his junta, which had seized power.

WATSON: Yes.

Q: By the way, what were our relations with Papadopoulos? We didn't particularly like him, but...

WATSON: No, we didn't much like him. He had overthrown democratic rule. There was some division in the embassy about recognition of and dealing with a his now illegitimate government. There were some outstanding officers in the Political Section. There were views and ideas at play, ethics, biases. I gained an appreciation of what went into political work.

I remember, at one point, I had the privilege, not really recognizing how important it was, of being the control officer for my first CODEL. A congressman from Chicago, Roman Pucinski. He arrived in Greece with a couple of colleagues from the Chicago area Greek American community. I shepherded them around doing this and that for the better part of a day. Then that evening, they became just a tad loose at a wedding festival, and unfortunately they were due to leave the next morning on a 6:00 am flight for Nicosia, Cyprus to meet with Archbishop Makarios and other notables. FSO Tom Boyatt was the control officer in Nicosia. To make a long story short, following the wedding evening festivities, I was able to get them to the Athens Hilton for a brief sleep, but rousting these gentleman out of their beds and getting them into the embassy car and then to the airport for the 6 am flight was a difficult task. So difficult that when we reached the departing gate, the aircraft had departed, but had not yet left the terminal for Nicosia. I tried my best to stop the departure but couldn't. Had I been the ambassador, or the political counselor, I might have known how to do pull this off, but I wasn't able to do that. The CODEL didn't seem to mind not going to Cyprus. They were happy to go back to the hotel, and to bed. I called Tom Boyatt from the embassy. He took the mishap with great grace and dealt with events on his end, I presume successfully. I caught no flack from the Athens embassy for this missed flight.

The political section work was very interesting. And the consular work equally so. Greece was a most marvelous country. As my wife and I look back, we think of Greece in very positive terms. We were able to visit several of the islands. We were able to get up to Meteora in the north. We developed a marvelous friendship with a Foreign Service National there, Alekos Tzinieris, and his family. He later died of cancer. All in all our tour was a positive experience. My daughters did well enough in their schools. My wife was finding and learning her way in the Foreign Service.

Ross McClelland was our DCM there, a very decent man, and his wife a very decent woman. He opened our eyes to a number of things. I was tasked with a couple of other challenges. He had me take the lead on the "BALPA" budget reduction exercise, and on another study. At this distant remove today, I can't remember all that I did or didn't do, but I have the sense that I did some decent work, not excellent but decent.

Then back we went to the States for training to prepare for our next assignment.

Q: Before we leave Athens, you mentioned that there were differences within the embassy as to how to deal with the Papadopoulos junta. Were the embassy and the Department in accord? Did they see eye to eye on this or were there differences of opinion there?

WATSON: There I was, as far "down" in the Political Section as you can get. As a matter of fact, Kay Bracken was initially our political counselor there, a woman, which for those times was undoubtedly quite unusual. She was succeeded by Arch Blood. I only worked with Kay a brief time. I worked with Arch for a longer period. Bob Keeley was another outstanding political officer, who some years later served as our ambassador to Greece. What was really possible in dealing with the Greek government at that time, which was a military government, as opposed to our prior dealings with the democratic body politic? I don't honestly know what the view was in the Department, but I do know that there were strong views within the embassy Political Section. I recall one officer who took the position which was more towards developing further and strengthening contacts with the democratic sector and isolating, if you will, the military government. That individual strongly took a position which was not unanimously agreed to at all within the Embassy. It was difficult for him. I respected very much his having taken that stand. I was inclined to side with him, but after all, it was the government of Greece and you had to deal with it somehow. That was reality. My appreciation of the political situation and nuances there was not near so developed as that of those regular political officers assigned to the section.

Q: When your tour came to an end, you went back to Washington for training. What were you trained in?

WATSON: I participated in a very fine administrative training program, a course called Administrative Management and Operations. Joan Clark headed it up. She was later Ambassador to Malta, then Director General of the Foreign Service and personnel. She is currently working to help AFSA with the Senior Living Foundation. There were a number of very good officers participating in that training program. I think course participants numbered only about 15, maybe 18. I believe the training lasted 12 weeks, late September to Christmas. Then, at long last, on the heels of that, I took Spanish language training, I think for a 16 weeks, and I ended with a three plus, three plus, and felt pretty prepared to go to Madrid, where I was indeed assigned as the Assistant General Services Officer, and later as the General Services Officer. I had decided to opt for the administrative cone, feeling only somewhat facetiously that we needed in the administrative field the finest of diplomats because you had to deal with people like Foreign Service Officers. Consequently you needed the best diplomatic skills.

While I was waiting at post for reassignment from Assistant GSO to GSO, the Officer in the Department who was my career counselor tried to obtain the General Services Officer assignment himself. He failed however as I had strong support at post. I had worked for the administrative counselor, Richard K. Fox, only for a year, a very fine year. Dick Fox, an African American, gave me opportunities galore. He said early on, "I want to stretch you beyond just the administrative area." He had me handle a CODEL along the way, and be Embassy control officer assisting the White House advance man, going to the Canary Islands to prepare accommodations for the U.S. astronauts headed our way. Subsequent to the Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Mike Collins astronaut visit, he had me go to San Sebastian, which is where the Spanish Government moved for the summer, to establish our residence and embassy there. Dick gave me many opportunities I might not have had with someone less confident. Dick and his wife Jeanne, and my wife Evelyn and I became lifelong friends. Years later the four of us together bought a Florida condominium which we shared for a number of years as a vacation spot. I remember vividly summer 1970 in Madrid, when President Nixon and his vast entourage came to Madrid. I was a smoker in those days, with a smoking regime which would start in the evening about the time I would have a before dinner drink. During the Nixon visit preparations that smoking hour moved from dinnertime, to mid-afternoon, to right after lunch, to just before lunch. During those four weeks or so, I lost 22 pounds, which I guess I could afford to lose. But it was a very difficult visit. I thought I could handle the whole GSO operation by myself. John Thomas, who then headed up the Administrative Operations Bureau in Washington, wondered if I didn't need help. I said, "No." Thank God he ignored me and sent a couple of folks to lend a hand. I had no appreciation at that time of what such a visit entailed.

Q: Presidential visits stretch administrative sections to the utmost.

WATSON: Absolutely. At the time of the presidential visit, Roger Abraham had replaced Dick Fox as the administrative counselor. More about Roger later. But I remember sitting in a meeting along with the Budget and Fiscal Officer, a White House advance fellow, a State advance fellow, and Roger Abraham, and I offered something along the lines of, "Well, the Hilton where they're staying is only a block and a half from the embassy. The weather prediction is good. They can walk. They won't need cars." Well, my learning pace increased after the White House and the State advance fellows both screamed at me. Of course, they were strung out, essentially exhausted, because they weren't getting the rest they needed. They were even angrier and nastier than normal. But I found out what high-level delegations can be like, and how our job abroad is to serve the current political administration and make the visit work, however: essentially, spare no expense. Lord how we do waste our resources.

Speaking further about Roger Abraham, Roger had been in the Foreign Service for a long time and had managed a lot of resources and a lot of people. He had been a little loose with some USG funds on occasion, as I understand it, but he was never found criminally culpable. Roger liked to take long lunches. Then in the twilight of his career, he wasn't really given to working a lot. He had learned to delegate. Roger liked those long three martini lunches. I refused to go with him. Roger was not much good in the morning, but after lunch he was worthless, if on those occasions he even returned to the embassy.

Another dimension of Roger Abraham. Roger wrote an evaluation of my performance. He was quite pleased with my work. He brought his evaluation to me, essentially in its final form, without any prior discussion. He was an old newspaper reporter and he had pecked out the evaluation out on the typewriter. I read it and it read beautifully. I said, "Well, that's fine. Thank you very much. I appreciate that. But you haven't checked any of the boxes." At that particularly time, there were, as I recall, 15 boxes across the page for each section of the evaluation form, ranging from the boxes on the left as not very good, to the boxes on the right, superlative. Roger put the form in the typewriter, adjusted it, went down to the first range of boxes, and said, "Well, let's put one in about here and put another one over here." I asked, "What are you doing?" He replied, "You've got to move them around just a little bit. They're still on the high end, but you've got to move them around for the board to give them any credibility." I said, "Okay" because he was, in fact, not incorrect I later learned through extensive selection board experience. If you had all the checks in the top box, folks would laugh, if they were all in the middle, they likewise. So, after all, if there were 15 boxes and you were in the highest range of the top five boxes, what did you care where the checkmarks ended up precisely. Roger had a rather casual approach to what I had theretofore considered a fairly exact process. Of course, evaluations are not exact or precise. Having now served on a number of promotion panels, and having chaired a number of panels, success largely depends on how well the report is written, what the narrative says, and how interactive the relationship is between the ratee, rater and reviewer. The boxes are important, but the narrative is key. If all parties had discussed the evaluation, if they know where they wanted to go, if they agree, and if they get along, that is what moves a Board to recommend promotion, in my view.

Q: In Madrid, what were some of our problems as General Services Officer that took your time and energy?

WATSON: There was a political appointee as the Ambassador, Robert C. Hill. I never cared for him, nor for his wife, Cecilia. Nor for either of their young boys. Their BMW the boys succeeded in wrecking. Problems? They were mundane, but significant for me. The swimming pool? How do you keep that heated and all the rest of it? After all, the USG installed it. The Chancery building ran on an east west axis so the south side of the building was always too hot and the north side of the building was always too cold. So, how do you fix that? Just dealing with the ambassador on that simple issue was terribly time consuming. And the Residence was actually a part of the Chancery. I was literally at their beck and call.

Those were interesting times, too, regarding U.S. policy in Southeast Asia. I decided on the heels of the Spain tour to go to Vietnam for a variety of reasons. It was the time of our incursion into Cambodia. While we in Spain were not dealing with Southeast Asia, folks had points of view. I recall Steve Bosworth, at that time the third officer in the Economic Section, taking a forceful and principled position concerning the Cambodia incursion, and was one of several Officers who wrote a petition and brought it to the attention of the Ambassador. I think Steve and his colleagues convinced the Ambassador to receive personally a petition from a significant number of private American citizens, and to meet and reason with them. Steve went on to become a very successful officer, Ambassador to Tunisia, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in ARA, head of Policy Planning, Ambassador to the Philippines during Marcos; downfall; then following retirement names Ambassador to South Korea.

Q: Did you have any dealings with our military there? There were a lot of them in Spain.

WATSON: Yes, as a matter of fact, at Torrejon air base, and these were very positive relationships. It was the first time our family had experienced a facility quite like that. The Torrejon facility provided opportunities for embassy people to get together there in an "American" environment, which some people need more than other English language library, the health unit, the hospital, the clinic, the PX, the school, all of these things. Those were all very positive. We had a good relationship with the airbase.

Q: When that pleasant tour ended, you went to Vietnam. Tell me how that came about.

WATSON: Well, I went to Vietnam for six principle reasons: to see if I could make any sense out of what our policy was by being on the ground; to make a contribution to our efforts there; to work with the U.S. military; to work for another agency (I was assigned to AID with what was called CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support); to get promoted faster (I thought that would be such an avenue); and to make more money (there was a pay differential).

So, from Spain I returned to Washington with the family. We got somewhat settled in to an Arlington apartment. I had training, about five or six weeks, only general orientation. Included in that training were 19 hours of early morning Vietnamese language training. That was the total, which didn't do you a hell of a lot of good, maybe enough to get you from the airport to the embassy.

Q: What did your wife think about your going to Vietnam?

WATSON: That is interesting, a very good question. I think that I was very inconsiderate of my wife and my daughters and their own needs. I was a fairly controlling spouse and father, without here getting into murky psychological issues. Since my "career", I believed, was ultimately for all of us, then if I got promoted and increased our earnings that was all to the good. Well, what about them? Where was the father? Where was the husband? So, my wife, I think, were she here during this interview, would say, "I went along with him. Those were things that he needed to do." But during my career she played "second fiddle" in so many respects. Of course, not until much later in our lives was I fully appreciative (and probably still am not fully appreciative) of everything that she did as a parent and, of course, as a spouse, and how much she gave to the family unit, how much she nurtured us all. As a matter of fact, once I was in Vietnam, and she ran the home and our daughters I could see she had done it beautifully, when I first came back on my first brief leave. Vietnam was an 18 month tour. You had to serve 90 days in country before you could come home on R&R, and then you had to serve six months before you could leave for your second stateside R&R. 90 days to the day I took my first R&R, six months to the day I took my second R&R. The first time I came back after having arrived in Vietnam in late September, if I'm not mistaken, and I was able to leave there perhaps on December 21st or so to come back to the U.S., at Christmas time. My wife had done a magnificent job with everything. Shortly after my arrival home, four or five days into it, I said I thought something ought to be a certain way. She sat me down and said, "Look, I've been doing this now for three months. Can we reach an understanding?" This was a real eye opener for me on how unappreciative I had been in our relationship.

So, on initial arrival in Vietnam, I arrived and was processed throughout the Embassy and the AID folks. Vietnam was simply different. I stayed there as short a period as possible, 18 months to the day. I was assigned to a small province, Sadec, in the delta just north of Can Tho, which was our IV Corps a regional headquarters. I was one of three Sadec Province Development Officers (PDOs). I reported to the Deputy Province Senior Advisor, a Lt. Colonel, U.S. Army. He reported to the Province Senior Advisor, a civilian.

Q: A chain of command with civilian and military both?

WATSON: It was both. The composition of the MAC-V CORDS teams in any province (and I can't even remember how many provinces there were, something like 17 or so), the bulk were mostly military. In Sadec, we had a small U.S. advisor military presence, maybe 30 or 40, but there was an attendant U.S. military assistance group also assigned there with whom we had a close working relationship. But it was not unusual to have a province senior advisor be a U.S. Army colonel and the deputy be a civilian or the reverse, where the civilian would be the senior advisor. After three months in Sadec, Wilbur Wilson, who was then the MAC V CORDS main man, flew into Sadec one day and said, "You're just the man we need to be the Deputy Province Senior Advisor in the adjacent province, Vinh Long." (Frankly, I think I was a just warm body to fill a billet, not that I had yet demonstrated any particular talents.) This was a bigger province with a much larger team and a much larger U.S. military component, about 200 U.S. personnel total, and perhaps 30 Vietnamese employees.

So, I went to Vinh Long as the Deputy Province Senior Advisor (DPSA) to a U.S. Army colonel, Wally Veaudry, a fine officer. Consequent to that position, I rated four U.S. majors who ran district operations (District Senior Advisors they were called) and each of the U.S. Army majors and captains running a particular functional logistics and supplies, personnel, operations, intelligence, public affairs. I also supervised and rated one Lt. Colonel who largely oversaw administrative functions, and the NCO Sergeant Major. I recall that in Sadec, the previous province, I also, as a Province Development Officer who had some responsibilities for health matters, rated an Air Force captain who had medical advisor responsibilities. When I rated him after about ten weeks together, towards the end of my three month tour, I gave him a 65 on a scale of 100. The Lt. Colonel brought me in and asked me if I had any idea what I had just done. I said, "Yes, that is about where he fits, C minus, D plus." He said, "You've just ended his career. He's got to be in the nineties or he's out." I said, "Really?" and jacked his rating up (what did I know?) to some point where it was more acceptable to the reviewing officer, the Lt. Colonel. And in fact this young officer wasn't in fact that bad. Then I found in rating the Majors in Vinh Long province, I learned from the lieutenant colonel who worked for me, overseeing most administrative issues, , and from the colonel for whom I worked, that really for a major, evaluations pretty well needed to start at about 92 and work their way up, anything else was death. So, advised, I took that seriously. One of the officers I rated, Major John E. Miller, a wonderful young officer, later became a four star general, retiring about 2000. There were a number of good officers. Certainly, the opportunity that I had sought to work with the military was certainly fulfilled. I learned a great deal. That served me well later on when I had to work a lot with Marines, military attachés and advisors, the intelligence community, and then as a sometime political advisor during the Haiti intervention, and in the Jamaica based interdiction of Haitian "boat people."

Also, working with AID was interesting. Many AID employees, and probably a lot of us with State, too, were not in Vietnam because we particularly cared about the future of Vietnam. Vietnam was where the jobs were. The money was good. Oh, the waste of resources was evident, on the civilian side and the military side. So, I had a chance to work with AID and to see some nominal successes, and to have insights into the corruption on the part of the South Vietnamese, the military largely, and how things would disappear (rice, cement, bricks, rebar). We did make some differences in the quality of life. It was wonderful working with young Vietnamese in education, the teachers, the doctors, the nurses. To witness death from military attacks, the death of Vietnamese, the wounding of Americans, of being fired at, although it might just have been a couple of sniper rounds. I never felt I was really in great danger, although we all were to some degree. It was interesting to find myself initially acting as though I knew what it was that I was doing. I certainly didn't. I was flying by the seat of my pants in that whole area of working with the military, working with AID, and in the development area when I first arrived. When Frank Taylor, who had been the economic Counselor in Madrid, and whom I knew just slightly, came over as a part of the IG inspection staff to do an inspection and to evaluate my performance after I had been on the ground in Vinh Long for about two months, he was dazzled. He thought I knew what I was doing. It's not that I fooled him. It's just that so much of our work was Greek to him. The fact that I knew anything at all was for him probably impressive.

Q: As an FSO, what was our relation, if any, with the embassy?

WATSON: None, and all the better for it in my view. I was delighted not to have any relationship with the embassy. I visited it a couple of times. I had the chance to go to Saigon with our province chief, attend a dinner with him hosted by one of the DCM's and at which in attendance was Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. Bunker was such a delightful man. From everything that I was able to ferret out, he certainly seemed competent. His senior DCM (there were a couple of minister counselors there) was a fellow by the name of Josiah Bennett, a very patrician gentleman with considerable Asian area experience. I was very impressed with him as well. I had the chance to meet as well Jackie Bong, a Vietnamese woman who had been married to a Vietnamese who was assassinated there, if I recall correctly. She later married a Foreign Service Officer, Lacy Wright. She too was at this dinner.

As things wound down in early 1975, I couldn't wait to leave in March, 1975, at my 18 month anniversary. But George Jacobsen who headed MAC V CORDS out of Saigon, in his wisdom thought that what I ought to do was go down to Can Tho and extend my tour and be the political reporting coordinator. We were establishing these regional offices then as things wound down. His suggestion was absurd. I didn't even speak Vietnamese. How was I going to coordinate these reports? But I was able to go there and help a bit until I finally left the country. I spent my last couple of months in Can Tho working with several outstanding officer Frank Wisner, Ken Quinn, Lacy Wright, Tom Barnes, a number of other capable officers. And I did get achieve from that Vietnam assignment the things I had sought: experience with another agency, experience with the military, a promotion, higher earnings (that pay differential having helped us substantially). But I never found sufficient reasons for us to be in Vietnam at that level of commitment.

Prior to the Vietnam tour, I remember as a part of our Vietnam orientation, our visit to the Central Intelligence Agency for briefings. Robert Komer briefed us on how important our role was in Vietnam. I asked essentially "why were we (the USG) there?" and he came up with some "democratic" pap, which most of us seemed to swallow whole, as I judged it. It was not a satisfying answer. I recall my "tour end" evaluation paper, in which I used an old Jimmy Durante quote "Did you ever have the feeling that you wanted to go and yet you had the feeling that you wanted to stay?" That was Vietnam for me. I had scarcely a clue during my 18 months as to how Vietnam really functioned. I wasn't at a level like Ken Quinn or Tom Barnes, who understood much of the dynamics and the politics. I just muddled through.

Q: Were you ever in any personal danger from the attacks or the snipers out there?

WATSON: Not really. I recall going down a canal in a small boat and there were rifle shots. You heard the rifles and you heard the whizzing of rounds going through the grass. Then we were shot at aboard helicopters. I don't believe the ships I was in ever took any rounds, and I traveled in helicopters frequently. It wasn't necessary that I be on combat missions in most instances, but I felt I needed to go on some missions to learn, to be informed, to understand more fully what our military colleagues were doing, not just to rely on operations and intelligence reports and briefings. But it was also as much for the experience as it was to show my military colleagues, who were regularly in harm's way, that I, too, was willing to take some risks. I thought that was critically important, especially in my relationships with the U.S. military officers. There were some positive relationships, some negative relationships. I had to brace a few military fellows. My "bracing" efforts were applauded by my supervising colonel. I learned a great deal about the military, particularly about the Army. I developed a substantial respect that I had not theretofore had. I think that knowledge and respect served me well over my career.

Q: Would you say that CORDS was a suitable program for an FSO?

WATSON: Absolutely. We had some competent officers doing our reporting, who often had access to a lot more information than embassy folks. To what extent that field information really fed into embassy reporting, or to what extent it fed into Agency reporting both in the field and in Saigon, I don't know. My view increasingly was that our reporting wasn't going to make a hell of a lot of difference anyway. Political policy had been decided in Washington and we were proceeding full bore. Now, 25 plus years later, with McNamara having revealed that everything was not always quite as crystal clear as had been pretended, my guess is that of those Foreign Service Officers who remained in the Foreign Service, who made a career of the Foreign Service, the Vietnam CORDS experience probably keenly broadened their understanding of the political process, and the key roles of the intelligence community and of the military. Vietnam for me was a significant experience and a very good one.

Q: You mentioned Ambassador Bunker. Did he ever visit your area while you were there?

WATSON: No, he didn't. I don't know how much field visiting he, in fact, did. I don't recall visits by embassy personnel. I remember Dick Holbrooke and other key Congressional staffers visiting us. Dick Moose, I think, also paid a visit.

Q: Your tour in Vietnam was certainly an interesting one, if perhaps a watershed in your career in some ways. When that was over, you finally got to Latin America.

WATSON: I did indeed, at long last.

Q: How did this happen? Did you ask for it?

WATSON: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, Sheldon Kryss was the officer in central personnel who was staffing Latin America. And Karl Ackerman headed ARA/EX. I imagine what I had done in Vietnam must have indicated that I had some kind of breadth. I suppose my general services work in Spain had been acceptable. And my personal rank was only one grade level below the administrative officer position in Quito, Ecuador.

So, I came back to Arlington and had a couple of months leave in March and April, followed by a four week Spanish brush-up. Sheldon said, "Okay, fine. We can assign you to Quito as an Administrative Officer." When I went back in for the language brush-up, my three plus, three plus had declined to two plus, three. The brush-up was very effective, getting me to the level where it needed to be so that when I stepped off the plane, except for making the mistake of using the Castilian pronunciations of the Zs and the Cs, as in "Gracias," which the Ecuadorians didn't use. I quickly learned Ecuadorian pronunciation and used the language extensively. Ecuador was a superb experience. What a beautiful, beautiful country.

Schooling there was very uneven for our daughters, junior high school and high school. First, they went to an "open school," the Cotopaxi Academy, for a year. We're not a religious family, but that second year they attended the Alliance Academy, a conservative evangelical private school. It sure beat the Cotopaxi open school, where today we somewhat laughingly say our younger daughter majored in tetherball.

In Quito I worked for a fine ambassador, whom I didn't appreciate as much as I should have. But I learned to appreciate him later in life. He was Robert C. Brewster, for whom I worked for two years. For our first year our DCM was Max Chaplin. Then Brewster "Brew" Hemingway for our second year. Ambassador Brewster was a good, hardworking man. His wife, Mary Brewster, was a delight, a tremendous woman, who I think never openly articulated what she believed, which I think was that Foreign Service spouses ought to have lives of their own and not be at the Foreign Service beck and call. Bob Brewster had come out of being the senior DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) in the office of the Director General. He knew management, he knew administration, and he knew politics. I could have learned a great deal more from him than I did. We never developed the personal relationship that I would like to have partly due to his being somewhat aloof, remote. I think essentially he was somewhat private, a tad shy. I should have sought him out more, but I was somewhat cowed by his "ambassadorial" status.

Our political counselor was John Negroponte, very competent, as borne out more fully later in his career. One of our other political officers was David Passage, who went on to have a very successful career and our assistant GSO was O. P. Garza, who also had a successful career.

There come to mind a couple of things of interest, I think, for an administrative person to have been involved with. That has to do with alcoholism, which in the Foreign Service exists as it does everywhere. I was able to intervene in Vietnam in one instance with a chap who we got "on the wagon," and sent on to counseling, an AID employee. Then when he later fell off the wagon, in one of the more outrageous, sad, but funny events when I found him at his apartment, instead of at work, with a bevy of young Vietnamese lasses, almost all of whom were only partially clad, as was he. We had failed badly in that we should have demanded more effective stateside counseling. Later, at another post, I was asked by the DCM to intervene with another problem drinker. I thought the DCM should have taken this responsibility himself, but he delegated it to me. The State Officer had a drinking problem, knew it, and appreciated the intervention. Subsequently and quickly straightened out. After several more years in the Service, maybe ten, he retired, still on the wagon. Those alcoholism issues had to be addressed. Later on, I was able to be a little bit more proactive at other posts where I would of my own knowledge become aware of such behavior, take the person aside and have a serious chat, and more often than not make some difference then and there. I recall that following my last overseas assignment, after I had been back at State for about six months, an officer, now also at State, called me and thanked me for my intervention. That was good. Intervention is not an easy thing to do.

At another post an officer suffered from body odor, largely because he didn't wash much and/or didn't wash his clothes. He was a first tour Junior Officer. That was a difficult one to deal with, to tell a chap "Change your socks, you smell." Somebody has to do it. That's why they pay us the big bucks, right?

Q: Well, that's why we have wives, but...

WATSON: That's right.

Ecuador was a marvelous place. I got to do some fairly proactive things in terms of creating new positions, bringing a security position into the embassy, expanding the housing inventory. I developed a good relationship with the Marines, supported the Consulate General in Guayaquil better, traveled to Cuenca, the third city, and arranged for an ambassadorial visit, new things for me.

The best thing we did during our tour there? My wife said, "Stop. You are working too hard. We are taking two weeks this Christmas and New Year's. We're going to the Galapagos." "But we can't afford it," I replied. "We're going to the Galapagos," she said. We went to the Galapagos. It was marvelous. Christmas, New Year's crossing the Equator, seeing the fauna and flora. Our daughters. Oh, it was marvelous, absolutely marvelous. What a woman!

Q: And it was restful, I'm sure.

WATSON: Yes. Bob Brewster was always a taskmaster. He gave a lot of attention to detail, which was important. I used to consider it nitpicking, but it was important. I learned a lot from him. It was a good experience. Ecuador: the land of the eternal spring.

Q: Did you have other agencies at the post?

WATSON: Oh, sure. It was small, relatively speaking, aside from the agencies that we normally have. There was a substantial AID presence, and a substantial Peace Corps presence. You know of the need to maintain the independence of the Peace Corps and not to color it with the embassy's activities. Ambassador Brewster was able to reach an accommodation with Peace Corps Director Ed DeJarnette, who subsequently became an ambassador, a State officer who had been seconded to the Peace Corps. They were able to work out a process in which different embassy officers would visit Peace Corps projects in the countryside and report as to how the projects were doing, through our eyes. I made a couple of visits to the field, met the volunteers, saw their work. It was a fine experience, getting on the ground and appreciating the work, and the Peace Corps volunteers themselves. A few of the officers in my entering J.O. class had served as volunteers. To see a little bit more of Ecuador was a wonderful opportunity. An opportunity that Bob Brewster and Ed DeJarnette provided four or five of us to get out and to do that kind of evaluation and reporting.

Q: What was the attitude of the average Ecuadoran toward the U.S.? Were they friendly?

WATSON: Very positive. They wanted something from us. They wanted aid. They wanted development of their oil riches. Texaco was big there in the jungle. I developed a relationship with Dante Fascell, the congressman from Florida, chair of the Subcommittee on Latin America. I was not his control officer, but I was the principal control officer for his key staffer, Mike Finley, who ten years or so later, became the senior Deputy Assistant Secretary in the ARA Bureau. I later worked on the Hill as a Pearson Fellow for Congressman Fascell, 1980-1981. I still have amongst his former staff (he now is deceased) a number of friends with whom I'm in touch. Having the exposure to Dante Fascell and to Mike Finley opened the door for me to the Hill and the political process. Until my time on the Hill, I had the impression that foreign policy was made at State. I began to appreciate the role of the Congress.

Q: Tell me about your problems there. Did we have any drug problems in Ecuador at that time?

WATSON: Not at all. There might have been an occasional marijuana problems with a volunteer or two, but with private American citizens, not at all.

Q: How about terrorism? Any thought of that then?

WATSON: None. There were some demonstrations at the university not far from the embassy, tear gas wafting our way. No, as a matter of fact, it was a most peaceful country.

Q: Did we have many American businessmen there?

WATSON: Very few. Principally Texaco. There wasn't a very large American community. But the American community there was a happy lot. Life was good in Ecuador.

Q: The U.S. military was probably attaché½s. Did we have a military group?

WATSON: No, we had only attaché½s who worked closely with the Ecuadoran military. There was a lot of military liaison with Bolivia, where we had a substantially larger military group, if I recall correctly. I developed some pretty good relationships with our military in Ecuador. That was my first opportunity to be a broader administrative person. I developed some reasonably good relationships there with the foreign ministry folks, working on protocol issues, and where we were able to get a number of things accomplished. We were able to establish an APO just as I left. We were able to achieve a more reasonable policy on the part of the Ecuadorians in terms of what cars could we bring in, what cars could we sell, and what cars could we take out. I developed some good and important relationships with the police. And with folks at the local hospitals and hotels, all the things such relationships can facilitate. We had an international conference there, where William Rogers, the ARA assistant secretary, came down. Also, the Deputy Secretary came down, his name escapes me. There were a few CODELs and congressional staff visitors. But we never were really tasked beyond that. The visitor load was relatively simple.

We had another "tuna crisis," but these crises went on regularly. Roz Ridgway was the desk officer for Ecuador. John Negroponte had the lead on the political side. So, the "tuna crisis" was in good hands. We did well.

Q: After those interesting years came to an end in 1975, you came back to this country and went to Harvard.

WATSON: I went to Harvard, that's right.

Q: Tell me about it. How did this come about?

WATSON: How did this come about? It probably goes back to my scoring only 72 on the written Foreign Service exam. The officers with whom I came into the Foreign Service were so much better educated, formally, than I. I had had a lot of problems as a kid academically, not because I was dumb, I just did some stupid things as a youngster. I had wanted very much to participate in the Department's mid level training program, which might include a university year. So, Harvard was one of the things that I wanted to do. Lo and behold, it happened. My former administrative counselor in Madrid, Dick Fox, was at that time heading up assignments in what was then called FCA. Sure enough, I was accepted to the university program.

So, off we went to Lexington, Massachusetts, where we lived for that academic year. Imagine how difficult that was for your spouse to relocate, put all your stuff in storage, go rent somebody's home and furnishings, snatch your kids out of a couple of marginal overseas schools, and then send them into another school system, with our older daughter into her senior year in Lexington, Massachusetts. Fortunately the Lexington Public High School was a good school. Our older daughter buckled down and blossomed, and was admitted to the University of California at Berkeley. The other daughter was in junior high. But none of this was easy on the family. Another assignment for me and my needs and my growth, far less for them.

So, I attended Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, earning a master's in public administration (MPA), which looks very good on a resume. But I don't know that the degree itself has done me any particular good in the Service or subsequent to retirement.

Q: I wanted to ask you whether you felt in your later career it helped you or not.

WATSON: No, I don't think it helped me.

Let me talk a little bit about the academic program at Harvard. It was phenomenal. I could essentially take anything I wanted, and essentially I did take what I wanted. There were certain required MPA core courses that you had to have. I also audited a number of courses. The dean of the Kennedy School was Don K. Price, who had taught at Harvard for some time. His second in command was Graham Allison. Joe Nye was also on the faculty. There were a number of other faculty luminaries. I learned there how the "other half" lives. You would find that some student in one of your courses, a graduate course usually, had been the valedictorian of his or her class, but so had everyone else in that graduate class. Valedictorians and salutatorians abounded. Products of Exeter, Groton, Philips, and other private schools, and public schools as well. But the value of a good education became increasingly apparent to me. These folks could analyze and synthesize with amazing grace, and frequently with a substantial dollop of disdain.

One of the finest things that I was exposed to at Harvard was the case method as taught at the Harvard Business School and to a lesser extent at the Kennedy School. We had several instructors from the business school, Joe Bowers being on just excellent. Marvelous cases which I could easily relate to. I do not excel at abstract thinking, and the case study method worked well for me.

Q: But administrative people deal in cases.

WATSON: That's true and it worked for me very well. I found it a delightful way to learn, impacting well, and indeed I did learn.

I also took an undergraduate level government course, though I can't recall the title, something along the lines of Government 101. That was with James Q. Wilson, renowned in matters dealing with the penal system and justice. The courses I took were all germane to the Foreign Service. My most difficult course was statistics, and with apologies to educators, I took what I called "statistics for dummies," given at the Graduate School of Education. It was certainly statistics 1. It was taught by a fellow by the name of Richard Light, I think, and he taught to my level. I learned how to use statistics and how to develop data. As a matter of fact, for the study I referred to earlier concerning personnel and the entry examination for the Foreign Service, I used some of the statistical techniques I had learned at Harvard.

I also took a course with Chris Argyris, who had done a number of studies in the State Department. He was superb. I also took a course at the Graduate School of Education, a course given for six hours each Saturday over several weeks. Entitled "Ego Development in Adulthood," the course drew substantively on the works of the psychologist, Eric Erikson. The course dealt with ego development, and ego needs at different stages of one's life. For example, to put it simply, our lives are pretty well designed up until about age six, set largely by our parents (if we're fortunate to have parents). Then elementary school. You're pretty well set during those grammar school years, and middle school and high school years. Then, for some young folks, they are also pretty well set for college, everything in order. So all along one has lived in a reasonably structured environment. But for many young folks, all of a sudden you find yourself at age 21, and perhaps even married. How in the world do you become an adult, and perhaps marry, correctly? Well, if you had guidance, mentoring, and counsel things might work out well. And how then do you become a parent? And what happens with all this mid life crisis business? And then there's "old age." Anyway, the course provided insights into how we develop, all of us somewhat differently. I found the course particularly applicable to my life, and certainly to my professional work as a manager.

I had a number of good courses at Harvard. I had a chance to be exposed to Pat Moynihan, who subsequently became a senator from New York. He had just come back to the Harvard faculty from the UN, where he had been our Ambassador. As I was doing a paper on the White House I met with him briefly soon after he had rejoined the faculty. During my interview with him, which couldn't have lasted more than half an hour, he must have been interrupted by the phone five times. He gave me very little time and less attention. And beyond that, I had attended his first lecture, in the field of international relations. In part it had to do with China that particular day, and as it was his first class, Daniel Patrick Moynihan coming back to Harvard, a "big" campus event. He entered this relatively small classroom, a hush settling over the assembled students. Ten minutes into his discussion, with folks seated along the floor on the right side of the room and also on the floor at the rear, a couple of fellows in the rear of the room, probably in their early or mid-20s, started to slip quietly out of the room through the rear, side door. Moynihan halted and said in a very loud voice, "Gentlemen," and they stopped. Everyone looked around. Again, "Gentleman," and one of the departing students responded, "We were just leaving." He said, "You will sit down! We do not walk out of a class at this school." They crept back to their spots on the floor and sat down. I was so struck. What if those fellows had simply said, "Buzz off" and left? But his authority, his presence, his "celebrity" at that institution was such that he made his command stick. I was impressed that he was able to do that. Though I'm sure not so much as was Mr. Moynihan himself was impressed with himself.

Q: While you were at Harvard, did you encounter any pro or anti government bias, having in mind the fact they knew you had served in Vietnam?

WATSON: No, not really. I think very few of the students at the Kennedy School would ever work for the government as a career. But in fact, many of them have gone on to government, local, state and federal, and to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). No, I didn't really see any bias like that. There were a number of us there from various branches of the federal government I knew a number from the State Department. I think we were looked at a little dubiously, if you will, by some of the students, the younger graduate students; "Who in the hell are these people? Who let them in?" I think many of the young elitist graduate students held us in low esteem.

I had the opportunity to audit some courses. One course in American art, a professor by the name of Wilmerding. He went on to become a noted scholar in American art. A marvelous course. We were also able to attend sessions and lunches at the Institute of Politics, and participate in other discussions. Working with other folks from our government, and from other governments, Germany and Canada come to mind. There were two young German students, in their mid-twenties, at Harvard for that year, and who over the Christmas holidays visited Washington. They later came to me and spoke of their visit to the State Department. Together they asked me "Why are there so many black people on the lower floors of the building, but there aren't any black people upstairs?" I described some of our history, where we as a society had been, and where we hoped and were trying to go. A quick and accurate insight by these young Germans.

Q: It was a true insight.

WATSON: Of course, and it still is true. There is no question. You find similar circumstances in almost any entity in this country. But it was prescient, a good observation.

Earl Kessler, a personnel officer came up from Washington and interviewed me to evaluate how I was doing, what my classes were, how I felt about the experience. So, my time there was evaluated by our personnel system.

Q: There were no demonstrations or anything else while you were there.

WATSON: No, it was all very calm. We went there in 1975 and we left in 1976. In 1975, the Red Sox won the pennant. I went to the Boston post office one midnight and dropped off our ticket application. And we obtained four tickets to a World Series game at Fenway Park. The Red Sox lost the series. So what else is new?

In mid-June I departed Harvard. My wife had preceded me down to the Arlington, Virginia area to look for a house. We thought it was time for us to buy, not having owned theretofore. We were all together in Washington on July 4, 1976. What could have been better? We saw the marathon on April 19, 1976 in Boston. We saw the militia reenactment on Lexington Commons in the early morning of April 19th. It was a good year for me. It was a decent year for my kids. It was just another year for my wife, establishing a home for that short period of time. But we had a chance to... we were surprised at how small the distances are in New England. We were able easily to go to New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and back to Lexington in a day just to look at the foliage.

Q: Let us wind up our first session here. We'll get together soon again to go on to the rest of your career.

Today is January 17th, 2000. This is Tom Dunnigan. I'm beginning the second interview with Doug Watson. Doug, we finished up with you having spent a year at Harvard. Then I notice you returned to the Department into personnel work. Would you tell us how that came about and what you did there?

WATSON: Yes. My first assignment was in something called Personnel/EX, the Executive Office for the Director General. It had an interesting reporting line directly into the Office of the Director General, who was at that time Carol Laise. The office was headed by a fellow named Larry Russell, well known and beloved by many in the Foreign Service, truly a character, a wonderful manager of people who pretty well enabled people to do all that they could. He gave people license to try things. I headed a small analysis shop called Human Resources Development. We did a number of analytical studies as to how to improve the assignment system, job and person matching, and a number of things having to do with affirmative action. I also was the second fellow in Larry's office and had a chance to run the overall office periodically for short periods. In that role I also coordinated with the parts of personnel dealing with folks who had disciplinary or interpersonal problems of different kinds, and also coordinated closely with the Bureau of Security (SY), the predecessor to Diplomatic Security (DS) today. I learned firmly (I had always anticipated this) that people of the Foreign Service were not very different from people in the rest of the United States, problems galore, differing aberrant kinds of behavior, mental problems, substance abuse problems, a very unattractive part of the Service, and a part that had to be dealt with. I found the personnel system to be quite fair in dealing with those folks suffering from this wide range of problems.

Q: Were many people separated from the Service for incidents like that?

WATSON: Not very many, really very few. No, not very many were separated.

The analyses we performed in my HR office enabled me to learn a great deal about the Department. Also, I was able to participate in some training exercises having to do with being counseled, and with counseling others, something that I built on over the course of the next several years and which improved my skills substantially in working with people, managing up, but more managing down and across, if you will. This served me well over time. I think probably those who remember me favorably, and there are bound to be a few that do, would characterize me as a "people person". I learned a lot of that from Larry Russell. Larry had also created opportunities for a number of folks who had some level of disability. I saw a number of such folk come into the Civil Service and the Foreign Service, and witnessed their progress. It was good working with Carol Laise. She was direct, and she was a woman, which was quite unique at that level. It was only at that time that affirmative action and more openness in the system were really beginning to take hold.

I also had the opportunity then for the first time, to participate in some of the activities of the Board of Examiners, something that I had always wanted to do in the Foreign Service. Subsequently, while I was in Washington over the course of what turned out to be a period of seven years total, I was able to work on the Board of Examiners occasionally for one or two days, and also to take a few trips (to Chicago, Detroit, San Juan, San Francisco, Los Angeles). I also was able eventually to go on a recruiting trip in which I take a great deal of pride. I visited one California college campus and 11 campuses in Oregon, talking to and meeting with students (graduate students mostly, but also undergraduates). Also, I was successful in identifying and in gaining the interest of a number of folks to serve on Foreign Service promotion panels as private citizen members: the Dean of the economic department at a major university, and the president of a large city NAACP, both women.

Q: Were you recruiting all students or were you leading heavily towards minorities in your recruiting?

WATSON: Towards all students, but we had a stated aim over this period of my seven years during which I was examining and recruiting (more for a concentrated period of four or five years) of reaching out to members of minority groups and to women. I remember particularly trying to reach members of the Native American community in Oregon and Washington state, but in fact, there were very few who had been identified by the university administrations as being members of that particular community, so it was hard to locate many candidates. But in our meetings with students and faculty, I would stress the affirmative action opportunities, as well as what I saw to be the continuing success of these programs. I had seen during my time a substantial increase in the Service in the number of Hispanic Americans, a slight increase in Asian Americans, and certainly in African Americans. I think most particularly an increase in the number of women from all groups, minority and white. There were some real successes, particularly with women, as is presently being demonstrated.

So, I finished that two year period and had a...

Q: Let me ask you one question. It was during that time when you were in Personnel that Secretary Kissinger gave impetus to a program called GLOP to move people from one area of the world to the other. That was largely focused on Latin America, which was an interest of yours. Did that have any effect on what you were doing or not?

WATSON: No, not really. That was the Global Language Outreach Program (GLOP), where you were not supposed to be saddled in a particular bureau. No, I didn't notice that it had any effect. It was just another initiative which may have had some success, short-lived.

Q: It moved me from Denmark to Israel.

WATSON: Well, that is something. It's interesting when you think about the Foreign Service, for example, just a couple of examples. If you learn Korean, you've got to invest a lot of yourself, as does the Department, in your learning. Where else are you going to serve? You've got one opportunity, Korea. If you learn Turkish, where are you going to serve? Are you going to serve in Cyprus or are you going to serve in Turkey? So, the opportunity is limited. Greek-How many opportunities do you have? If you have world languages, it's a more open field.

Q: After those two years in Personnel, you went up to the Hill.

WATSON: No. I went from there to... and this was quite a fight because at that time, still under the old eight grade Foreign Service officer system, O-1 through O-8, ... I was only an O-4 and was able, thanks to Larry Russell's support, to take an O-3 position heading up the Office of Latin American Assignments in what was then Foreign Service Counseling and Assignments (FCA). That fall, after having gotten the position, I indeed did appear on the FSO 3 promotion list. My two years in FCA enabled me to work broadly with the personnel system across the building and most closely with the folks in ARA/EX. That was a very good experience. I worked for some fine people. Harry Barnes was a marvel as the Director General. Bob Gershenson was one of his deputies, very bright, superb interpersonal, caring, skills. We had some off site "thinking" sessions in Warrenton and at Airlie House. This approach, off-site, was rather new for the Department. I was able to work in my previous assignment and in this one with both Michael Maccoby and Chris Argyris, management development specialists, human resources folks. We did some constructive things. We had some outplacement initiatives that Larry Russell had developed, an outfit called Tom Hubbard, Inc. (THINC), for outplacement of officers who were being selected out, and which became (over the course of 20 some odd years) the forerunner of the outplacement program, helping Foreign Service personnel make that retirement adjustment.

Q: It's important.

WATSON: Sure it's important. It's an extremely important bridge into a "new" existence. I was involved in a number of other projects. I had mentioned earlier the entrance exam scores. I also worked for Karl Ackerman, then Andy Steigman, who headed FCA; followed by Ron Palmer. I remember Ron Palmer talking about a conversation he had had with Dick Holbrooke who then was the assistant secretary for African Affairs. I remember Ron coming back to the large Friday assignments panel session, where there were about 20 of us in the room assigning people here and there, where Ron told us of his conversation with Holbrooke, and Holbrooke having said, "Look, Palmer, I rolled your predecessor and I'll roll you," regarding a particular assignment the central system wanted, but Holbrooke didn't.

Q: That sounds like Dick.

WATSON: So they say.

I was able to do an analysis while in FCA of the program bringing folks into the Foreign Service through the Mid Level Affirmative Action Program, those who were members of minority groups, and/or women who were 31 years or older, bringing them in at a mid level range. I think at that time it was probably from the grades O-5 through O-1. But what was happening is that we would bring in these very bright people who had demonstrated their capacities, maybe in the banking field, maybe in political science, maybe on the Hill, maybe in education. After a very modest Department orientation, we would send them out to post. These new Officers needed early on to go abroad, otherwise, they would be disadvantaged. Well, the train they boarded was moving very fast, and it was hard to get them quickly up to speed. So, through a study I did, directed by Andy Steigman and Art Woodruff, his deputy, we figured out how we could address this. It was pretty simple. You put these mid level folks into a Junior Officer orientation course for six weeks or so. You make sure that they got not only the normal dollop of language, but whatever was necessary so that they could meet the language requirement was, build their confidence, enabling them to understand better how the system worked, and then assign them in a temporary capacity for two to four weeks in a relevant office in the Department perhaps in the regional bureau, perhaps in the Economic Bureau, perhaps in Political Military Policy depending on the overseas assignment. Then, most importantly, to make sure that they didn't go out to an embassy where they were charged with more responsibility than would quite be fair. For example, the best option might be to have that person be the second or third person in an economic section working for a counselor who was experienced, and was seen by the system to be a good mentor. Anyway, a consequence of my work was my being chosen as the recipient of the Department's first Equal Opportunity Award. Thanks to Andy Steigman, who gave me the chance, and Art Woodruff, and then Art's having cared enough, unbeknownst to me, to recommend me for this award. Finally (a year or so after the award had been announced) I did receive the award from Vivian Derrick, a delightful woman who was heading the EEO office, and whom I still know. I was disappointed not to have had the award presented by the Secretary. I thought the award was of such importance that he should be make the presentation, not only for me but also to raise the profile and demonstrate the importance of the mid-level program.

Q: Call attention to this.

WATSON: Yes. I would just say to George Shultz, whom I admire tremendously for his service to our nation, and for his service as a Marine, and for being a gentleman, a wonderful man, "Hey, take a few minutes and give me this thing and take a picture so that folks understand your commitment to the idea of equal opportunity."

Q: Ten minutes would have done it.

WATSON: That's a long story.

Q: I wanted to ask you about your work in Latin American assignments. Did you find it difficult to get candidates for Latin American positions in ARA?

WATSON: Yes, it was. Not as difficult as it was for the folks staffing African posts. That was the most difficult. But it was very difficult for ARA. ARA had up to that time devoted substantially less resources for, and had been unable to obtain the resources, to provide the kind of creature comforts that posts, for example, in Africa, South Asia, and the Near East had provided for years in terms of housing, accommodations, furnishings, and a lot of relatively simple things like that. Same thing in Southeast Asia, where post support had been stronger. Of course, Europe was always Europe-EUR always got the plums. It was difficult to staff Latin America. One of the wonderful challenges about the assignment area of personnel had to do with organizing and being able to understand what the needs were, to know actually what the position person matching requirements were, and then to coordinate the activity so that you could get enough candidates for the jobs, and develop the relationships with the different bureaus, whether ARA, Consular Affairs, Economic Affairs, Tom Pickering's OES (areas I also staffed), to make the best match you could. It was difficult. Of course, you, Tom, as an old personnel hand know how difficult, how awkward it was.

Q: It is awkward and it's not a simple proposition either.

WATSON: No. So, I did that for two good years. I did occasional Board of Examiner trips, as I said. I had wanted as a next assignment the Deputy Executive Director position in the European Bureau. I was the candidate of the Personnel Bureau, but EUR didn't want me, they wanted someone else. EUR won. I did not attend that assignments panel meeting, as it was a matter of policy and it would have been inappropriate. But my support around the table, I was later told, was something like 19 to one in my favor. But that didn't carry the day. The equity of the assignment was overridden by the desires of the European Bureau.

Q: Who was the executive director of EUR then?

WATSON: Dick Bowers. He later went off as Ambassador to Bolivia, I think, and now is retired. But I was sour. I was really sour. I can't pretend as though I weren't sour. I went over temporarily to BEX, which was a typical holding position; either a holding position for folks who weren't bad but who were looking for assignments, or it was a graveyard for those who couldn't get work. I like to think I fit the former category. So I went over to BEX for about four weeks. I did some analyses and some examining. Also I took the Foreign Service Exam again, acting as a tentative examinee. I was pleased to have passed it with a higher score than I had had initially. I also recruited in Puerto Rico at that time. Then I went up to the Hill, not under the American Political Association Fellows Program, where you serve a half year on the Senate side and a half year on the House side, but under the Pearson Program, named after the Senator from Kansas. That was a most marvelous year, an eye opener. Theretofore I had really felt the Department had the key role in foreign policy. I learned a great deal. I had my eyes opened. This was working for Representative Dante Fascell (a congressman from Florida, a democrat who had been in the House for years and years, whom I first met during his Ecuadoran visit as earlier described). As a Pearson Fellow, I had a chance to go to Florida with him while he was campaigning for office, and to attend a few constituent meetings that October. I had reported to his office in September. Then for BEX I went off on my recruiting trip to the West Coast though still assigned to the Hill. I came back and went down to Florida and attended two or three meetings with him and members of his staff during his House race. He had a quite secure seat. My wife and I went to a get together just the other night and again saw four or five of these staffers. Fascell is now deceased. But that was a wonderful year. I think what I brought away was a keener understanding of the foreign policy process, but more than anything, the power of the Hill and how to relate subsequently in my onward assignments with congressional staff and certainly with the members of Congress. They all get out of bed and put on their pants one leg at a time, like the rest of us.

Q: What attitude did you run into in regard to the Department and you as a Foreign Service officer?

WATSON: Folks on the Hill think we're very smart. There really is a "they" at State from the Hill perspective, as there is a "they" perspective of Hill staffers and members from the State side. There are many staff people on the Hill who think that many Foreign Service officers, while intelligent, are terribly snooty. That is not colored by the history of the striped pants, cookie cutting set. It's not that history. It's an attitude that we somehow project. I don't know how that is, a standoffishness, if you will. This "Hill" assignment program is invaluable, something I lobbied for at every chance. And in the assignments business we would counsel junior and mid level officers to hie themselves up there for that opportunity. It was a valuable experience.

I also recall another comment of one staff member of the House Committee on Foreign Relations; he said, "People pass through committee staff and congressional office staff and turn over with some regularity. But it's nothing compared to the Department. With State we're dealing with somebody in Europe about something in particular and they're gone, and then there's somebody new, and then we've got to bring them up to snuff." So, they felt State turnover markedly, as we all have. But turnover is kind of a condition of our job.

Q: Of the job. It's a valid criticism, but it can't be helped.

WATSON: Kissinger's idea of getting people out into other areas, Global Language Outreach Program (GLOP). But where is the balance between expertise and fair assignment rotation? Do you just want to leave somebody in whatever, for example, Yugoslavia was then? You want to leave them there for how many years before they become captive of that country and lose their objectivity?

Q: Let's turn the question around. Did the Department want your views on what the attitudes were on the Hill? Was there any interest?

WATSON: Yes. From time to time, I would get those interests from the office of the ARA assistant secretary, from the Bureau of Personnel folks, from the folks in what now is "M", as to resource implications and how Fascell felt about certain things, asking that I seek him out on occasion. That was about it.

While I was there, I wrote one significant speech for Fascell, having to do with immigration policy, a big concern in Florida. We had had the Cuban Mariel boatlift, and the Haitian boatlift, and so forth. I wrote this dynamite speech and ran it by his legislative assistant. Everybody quietly cheered my effort. I went with the Congressman to Georgetown University, where he gave the speech to a large crowd. Along with the Congressman, I was also introduced by the president of Georgetown. Fascell put the speech in front of him there at the podium, then walked back and forth across the stage as he delivered his 20-30 minutes of commentary. I don't think he touched on even three points in my text. He knew exactly what he wanted to say. Hell, he knew the subject backwards and forwards. But it was a good exercise for me. I learned a bit about immigration policy. It was a good year, exposing me to a great deal on the Hill. To this day, I have a certain understanding of the machinations that go on up there that I never would have had otherwise. It certainly served me well in the field, whether it was Congressman Ben Gilman visiting or Congressman Charlie Rangel, or Porter Goss, or a senator, or when I was in Haiti and former President Carter and his wife were there as election observers - I just had a much more savvy understanding of what was involved.

Q: Well, it seems to me that you had two excellent experienceone in the education world at Harvard and then this in the legislative world.

Following that year as a Pearson Fellow, you went back to the Department of State. If I understand it correctly, you went to the Bureau of ARA as Executive Director.

WATSON: As a matter of fact, I went as the Deputy Executive Director. It was a marvelous assignment. I worked for Executive Director Don Bouchard for two years. "Too Tall" Tom Enders was our assistant secretary. I remember once when I was acting executive director, Don was traveling somewhere. Don didn't travel a great deal, so I didn't have many opportunities to sit in for him. But I recall being with Enders in his office, and Enders (he didn't know me from Adam), said "I suppose you're going to tell me I can't do this, but here is what I'd like to do." Before he said anything further, I had learned to say at that point, "We probably can. Whatever it is you want to do, we can probably find a way to do it, as long as it's legal. What is it you need?" and that's what I said. But it's something you learn over the course of time as opposed to saying, "Gee I don't know if we can..." That pretty much describes the difference between the managers who are successful and those who aren't. There is a fine line. It's not necessary to break rules. You have to bend a lot of things, but things bend in different directions. You just have to be willing to try. Think "can do."

Q: I never saw an ambassador who didn't want that attitude in his administrative officer. "Don't tell me what I can't do."

WATSON: That's right. The opportunity there as the deputy working for Don... I remember asking Don, who later rose to be the senior Deputy Assistant Secretary in Personnel and then to be the Assistant Secretary for Administration (A), a big job... I remember saying to Don, who is a very quiet, soft-spoken guy, and who gave me plenty to do - and I subsequently gave others plenty to do - but it's interesting: Don delegated to me because he knew or thought I could do it... but I remember asking him during our first year, "When did you first start delegating?", which is what he did, he delegated. He answered, "As soon as I found somebody I could delegate to." That was just another eye opener.

I had some marvelous people working with me. Just to mention a couple: Mario Cantu, our General Services Officer, who currently is the second guy in Performance Evaluation. What a marvel. He is another guy who simply did whatever had to be done. And Jerry Tolson, making the bridge from having been a security officer to post Management Officer, and who eventually went out as Consul General in Sydney. He rose to the rank of Minister Counselor and is about to retire. And O.P. Garza, a wonderful officer who now is our Ambassador to Nicaragua. These two guys were "just" post management officers. And they had the wherewithal to be so much more.

Q: As I remember ARA some years ago, the Executive Office, there was a program called "Back to Back with AID." What had happened to that?

WATSON: The Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, which once upon a time was called American Republics Affairs, hence the "ARA," the ARA/USAID back to back. I don't really know very much about that other than that there had been a program which had somehow grown out of the Alliance for Progress to try to more closely coordinate the assignments of people and other resources to posts between State and AID. By the time I got to ARA/EX, there was nothing left of it but the physical location of AID's administrative apparatus adjacent to ARA's, and a close working relationship that had over time been retained by those who had been around for a while, who remembered what it was like when they were trying to implement that provision, but that coordination was no longer a factor.

Probably one of the more important things for me that came out of my time in the ARA Executive Office were relationships with the different offices in the Bureau and elsewhere in the Department. My relationships with the Personnel Bureau, which had grown over the course of four years working in that Bureau, those stood me well, my understanding of the assignment system. Most importantly was having the opportunity to get out to the field and visit some 20-25 countries, and perhaps half of our total posts, perhaps 30 posts, including consulates and consulates general. I came to know what was really happening on the ground. With a hand held tape recorder in the course of a day I could record my observations and, indeed, in some cases have a secretary there in the embassy transcribe that tape so that I could bring it back to the Department. Back in those days, you didn't fax much or turn your notes into cables, but I could bring back a pretty well sketched out report by the time I returned. Once back in ARA/EX if in one particular post we found 20 items of concern, we could probably immediately address five. We would address another five within a couple of weeks. Then we would try to handle the remainder over a relatively short course. Then either I or Don Bouchard would get back to the Ambassador in some cases, the DCM in many cases, certainly the administrative counselor or administrative officer immediately with, "Look, we've followed this up." We did it by phone, although we used the phone a lot less in ARA than they did in some bureaus, particularly EUR, which has always been responsive by phone. So, I learned a great deal about the posts.

As John Thomas, Assistant Secretary for Administration and famous in management of the Department, said to me years earlier, as soon as he arrived at the airport on a visit, he could tell what a post would be like immediately from the way he was received, what the organization was, if people knew what in the world they were doing. I learned the importance of being responsive and I got to know the ambassadors and the DCMs. When I would arrive at a post, I could pretty well anticipate what I would find. John Thomas was right.

Q: What were the major problems you encountered in your service in the executive director's office? Were they personnel, financial, property matters, relationships?

WATSON: I think they were mostly personnel, getting competent people into the jobs whether it was in the bureau or in the field. Particular posts were just very difficult to staff. They were not attractive. I remember one particular instance (I won't cite the country or the time because it would be too specific) where we had a counselor of a section who was just not up to the job. We were able to get him out of there, thank God. He had all sorts of problems, personal and professional, family, substance abuse, financial. Folks protect one another and they let things limp along. It was personnel.

The second part was resources. We were so far behind AID in computerization, the use of simple word processing facilities in the field. When you compare and contrast the quality of life in terms of housing and furnishings that AID personnel enjoyed compared to State, it was really rather horrendous. I also developed some good relationships with the other agencies in the field whether the Office of the Defense Attache, USIS, or the Foreign Commercial Service, or others.

I also was able to be very supportive of M/Med's activities where we had regional people for example in Bogota and Montevideo, to be supportive of M/MED's needs. Also, in the Caribbean, the small island states which were administratively woefully neglected. This was a simple reflection of their importance. They weren't and aren't very important, relative to the major countries. But when that relative lack of importance filters down to support for your people, it reflects in the quality of management at the post, sometimes painfully.

Q: Do you feel that you received direction from the assistant secretary and his deputies or did they leave you pretty much on your own to handle problems?

WATSON: We were left pretty much on our own. Don Bouchard had been brought to ARA/EX by Assistant Secretary Tom Enders, as Don had been Enders' Administrative Counselor in Ottawa. They had a good relationship. But Enders didn't care a whole lot about "people" in general, nor administrative matters. He did policy. There were various DASs in the front office. Don related very closely with them. I did less as that was Don's portfolio. He liked the managing up part and managing across in the bureau. I did the nuts and bolts and the "managing down", which is pretty much the way it's worked for me in my career. But we also had a couple of fine deputy assistant secretaries. One in particular was Steve Bosworth, who has retired from the Foreign Service, went on and did other things, and now is back as our ambassador to South Korea. But we did not get a whole lot of interest from "Too Tall" Tom Enders. Tom just wanted administration to be taken care of, so that's what we did, we took care of it. Don Bouchard was a master of getting good information from sources throughout the building, from the front office and from the field.

Q: How about the M, the Under Secretary for Management? Did he pay much attention to what was going on in the bureau?

WATSON: Yes, through his executive assistant in largest part, who was a very senior administrative person, a couple of whom I could name, a couple of whom I don't recall. But by and large, the under secretary for Management managed up also and across in a general way, but left the bureaus to the executive directors and the assistant secretaries, dealing only with executive directors and assistant secretaries when serious problems arose.

Q: He had to keep his eye on the Secretary always.

WATSON: Oh, yes, all the time.

Q: Did you undertake any building projects while you were in the executive...

WATSON: Yes, more than I can begin to name. We dealt with so many, buying this property, building that building, working with FBO. Property purchase and leasing was always so problematic, and it remains problematic. The recent tragedies in Africa are examples of that. True security can only be assured by buying the acreage which is distant from where you ought to be, then you can really put up barricades. Then, of course, it's harder to attack that facility. Your people are always at risk and will remain at risk, as is evidenced by the murders of many individual CIA chiefs, attaches, others simply because they've got to go places or be at home, in addition to being at the workplace.

Q: Did you succeed Bouchard or did he stay there your entire time?

WATSON: No, he stayed there. I was the bureau's candidate to go as DCM to that lovely isle of Haiti. This was 1983. I was to be paneled. Clay McManaway was going to go as Ambassador and Ambassador Ernie Preeg was coming out. They had both agreed to me as DCM for whatever the overlap period was to be. Lo and behold, Mexico loomed on the horizon. Mexico had a fairly new ambassador, John (Jack) Gavin, from California, a Spanish speaker of the first order, very attractive personally, a strong personality, well plugged into the White House. President Ronald Reagan had formerly been president of the Screen Actors Guild, as had been Ambassador Gavin. Jack Gavin was an actor and as ambassador he remained so. He was truly a piece of work. To make a long story short, Don Woodward had been the Administrative Counselor in Mexico and was to have served there three years. But he had the good sense at about the two year point to seek and to achieve tour curtailment. That left us without an admin counselor in Mexico, administratively our most problematic post.

Q: And probably the biggest in Latin America.

WATSON: Oh, yes, absolutely. And far larger than most people recognized. We had nine or 10 consulates. Four of those were consulates general. We had 12 consular agencies. We had 30 some agencies in Mexico City. Don Woodward had the good sense to take a walk, essentially to bail out. Don Bouchard turned to me one day and said, "Soldier, you know what you really have to do for us." I said, "I am not interested in Mexico. I want to go where I can be DCM, or eventually ambassador. So, to make a long story short, I went home and said to my wife, "The right thing to do is to go to Mexico. That is where the needs are. It's a lousy post. It is managed badly. Relationships between the ambassador's office and the rest of the mission are horrible." So, we went.

At about that time there was a chap down the hall from ARA/EX, a Foreign Service Officer (I think he was an FSO 4 "old" system designation - a mid level officer. His name was Don Lyman. At that point, Don Lyman was the third guy in the Office of Mexican Affairs. He had probably been in the Foreign Service seven or eight years. I think the appropriate descriptor for Lyman was "snotty." Gavin, throughout his appointment as ambassador and his confirmation, had in large part been handled by Lyman, and he wanted Lyman to work for him as his special assistant in Mexico and Lyman chose to resign as an FSO-04 and to be appointed the next day as an FSR 1. He joined Gavin in Mexico for a couple of years, and then resigned, entering the private sector. On balance the Foreign Service's gain, simply getting rid of him. And what a snot he was. He was Gavin's hatchet man. He had wreaked havoc on the post by the time I arrived there. We arrived on a Friday. Sunday night, we were all gathered at Lyman's house (Lyman had, by the way, moved into the DCM's house, since the previous DCM, George High, had been summarily asked to leave, and a new DCM had not yet been named). So, when I arrived, there was Lyman settled into in the DCM's house, that being where he intended to stay. So, he had my wife and me over for dinner, and the Ambassador and the Ambassador's wife, Connie Towers (Mary Constance Towers Gavin), an actress and singer of stage and screen fame. We watched the Redskins, they won that particular and important game. Then I had the good sense to go for lunch the next day with Lyman at Sanborn's Cafeteria next to the embassy. Then two days later, I went with the other special assistant, a political appointee, Drew Arena, and had lunch with him, figuring I might do some good, lay some cooperative ground, trying to make it work. These guys, both of them, were both so obnoxious and supercilious. Both were hatchet men for Gavin. Gavin later brought in a third special assistant for legal affairs, a fellow by the name of Bill Manoogian. I believe he was from a well heeled family in Cleveland or thereabouts.

Gavin became very dissatisfied with me in short order (I don't know whether it took two or three weeks.). I recall one thing which offended him. I suggested at the big daily staff meeting with some 30 40 people in the room that one of his ideas deserved further examination before we implemented it. He didn't like that at all, he figured his idea was good enough, period.

What he then did, through Lyman, his special assistant, who at that point was acting DCM, had me issue an administrative notice announcing that the then counselor for the Foreign Commercial Service, Cal Berlin, a wonderful guy, would be the acting Administrative Counselor and I would be reporting to him because that's what Gavin wanted. It was indeed a difficult time for me. I think if I had had more guts, I would have somehow left post, been reassigned. But I didn't do that because I thought I was too good. Over the course of maybe 10 days, that particular arrangement fell apart thanks to Cal Berlin, who was very supportive to me, trying to help me get over this hump with Gavin and Lyman. To make a long story short, after some months, the DCM designate, Morris "Buz" Busby, a wonderful guy who had come to State after a substantial career in the Navy, he and his wife, Judy, came down to post prior to assignment to get the lay of the land before they came on assignment. I told him what the situation was, the unvarnished truth as to the problems I had with Gavin, and particularly with Don Lyman, the problems Gavin had with everybody, and with Lyman as the root of a lot of the mission's problems.

Q: Cal Berlin was then out of the picture as far as administration was concerned?

WATSON: He was out of the picture. I was doing the work for which I had been assigned and I was busting my hump. It was the most difficult assignment I've had in the Foreign Service. It was also the job at which I was most successful. But I must say that Gavin's handling of the Mexican American relationship was very good. He was very strong and very firm and wouldn't take a lot of stuff from the Government of Mexico. His Spanish was superb and he was such a wonderful act to observe. He was a little like a good priest at high mass. He was a very good actor. It was just a beautiful show. The things that he would do...he would make sure his profile was right when people came in the office, the lighting was correct over his desk. His attention to detail cannot be imagined. The work we did in his residence. It was fine, excessive in many ways, but on balance it turned out well.

Eventually, Busby came to post as DCM, subsequently to find another house for the DCM because Lyman insisted on staying in the former DCM house while special assistant. Busby was an excellent DCM. He gained Gavin's confidence through his competence and his strength. After all, Gavin had selected him through interviews and meetings in the Department. Buz marked his time initially. Lyman would handle certain portfolios. For example, as I recall, I think Busby handled narcotics, customs, and consular affairs. Lyman declared that he would handle political affairs, economic affairs, and intelligence matters. There it was. Buz realized that time would tell, he knew and recognized his own worth and value. And it did work out. Lyman left in July, not quite a year following my arrival date, prior to having performance evaluations submitted to the Department. I'll never forget the evaluation he did of me. It was the first time in my life I rebutted virtually everything he had written. My response was lengthy. The head of Consular affairs, Larry Lane, a fine chap, our Consul General, who was on the post review panel for the evaluations, came to me and said, "Are you sure you want to do this? The evaluation is not that bad." I said, "Lyman's report is terrible." I left my lengthy rebuttal to stand as it was.

Busby was so good that over time he was able to attenuate much of the hostility that Gavin had generated.

Q: Lyman was not replaced?

WATSON: He was not replaced by a special assistant. We just kept the other two special assistants Arena and Manoogian. We had Secretary of State visits, CODELs galore, parliamentary meetings, a presidential visit...I worked closely with Bob Pastorino, was our economic counselor. When the great earthquake of September 19, 1985 struck, Busby was on an official visit to the Tijuana area, as I recall. Gavin was back in Washington on consultation. Pastorino or I had acted as DCM or chargé¹/₂ when Busby or the ambassador were away. I had done it once, Pastorino had done it once, the Political Counselor had done it once. Bob Pastorino was chargé¹/₂ when the earthquake occurred. So, Bob and I on the heels of that earthquake coordinated beautifully. We obtained the necessary resources working with the AID fellow there, Sam Taylor, to assist the GOM. The earthquake was indeed a tragic event. Our first principal concern had to be American citizens. We did a very good job at that. Yes, we did a good job. I was pleased with how the mission performed in that crisis.

Q: And in terms of crisis management and organization...

WATSON: It worked well.

Q: Was the embassy itself badly damaged?

WATSON: We were not badly damaged. The embassy is built... the subsoil there is quite unstable. Once upon a time, Mexico City was located on a lake bed in large part, so the subsoil is "spongy". You might think of the embassy as having been built on something like an inverted bathtub or on pontoons. That is, the embassy would "float" a little, "give" a bit. There was very little in the way of structural damage. There were a lot fine heroic performances by embassy personnel, a few somewhat self-serving however, "showboating."

Q: Were any Americans killed or badly injured?

WATSON: I don't recall that any American citizens were killed, a few were injured. U.S. government American employees were not injured, though a few Foreign Service Nationals were hit by falling plaster in their homes. The Foreign Service National staff pulled their weight and did a hell of a job.

It was a very challenging post. I think the Lyman and Gavin relationships were those are important vignettes as concerns my own personal career. But I had a chance to travel around the country quite a bit, to provide better support for the consulates and consulates general, and the consular agencies. Tijuana had been left insufficiently funded and staffed over the years, the embassy I fear assuming that Tijuana, being next to San Diego, could take care of itself. That wasn't the case, and the post had been badly managed. We were able to provide more resources. When I arrived in Mexico City, we had computers sitting in boxes never opened. Attention had not been paid. We did quite a bit to bolster information systems. We also were successful in buying a substantial piece of property immediately adjacent to the embassy, costing some \$2 plus million. We had good working relationships with the police, to the extent that you could work with the Mexican police, a force which was and probably is rotten to the core.

Q: I wanted to ask you about corruption, whether that was any problem.

WATSON: Yes, sure, throughout the country. We reduced the amount of our Christmas gratuities. We made sure that they were fairly nominal. But I think they helped us in our work.

Q: Gratuities meaning bribes?

WATSON: No, just Christmas gratuities, the traditional bottle of whiskey. On another subject, I recall the death of Kiki Camarena, the Drug Enforcement Administration agent who was tortured and killed in Guadalajara. Buz Busby, our DCM for whom I continue to have the greatest admiration, and I developed a good relationship, and he entrusted me to do a variety of things. He chose me to go to Guadalajara as the representative of the embassy, of the USG. I saw to the transport of Camarena's body, along with the Marine guards. Narcotics are a problem that continue to plague us there.

Q: How many people did you supervise as administrative counselor?

WATSON: I don't recall precisely. A lot. When you include the consulates and all the Foreign Service Nationals, there are at least a couple of hundred direct hire employees. During my time there, we fired a number of people at the embassy and at consulates, Foreign Service Nationals, for various offenses. We had to fire successively two presidents of the Foreign Service National organization at the embassy in Mexico because of kickbacks taken, and for activities concerning importation of vehicles into Mexico from the United States, abusing his credentials as an embassy employee. But these employees were exceptions. The mission FSNs were good and dedicated employees. But corruption was rampant in Mexico generally, the temptation real.

Q: You mentioned automobiles. Wasn't there a problem of diplomats driving cars that hadn't been made in Mexico?

WATSON: Oh, yes. It was a mess. We finally straightened that out. We were eventually able to get just about any vehicle imported. It was very difficult. If in Mexico Chrysler was making Dodges and Plymouths, you could bring in Dodges and Plymouths, but not other vehicles. If I recall correctly, and I like to think I do, we were able to work with Mexican protocol officers and others, and thanks to Buz Busby's efforts, we had a number of meetings with GOM officials about all kinds of imports, they import a wide variety of equipment that we would bring in through Laredo, Texas. That was an essential purpose of our consulate in Laredo, a procurement and shipment enterprise for materials which we imported for official use. We also expanded substantially our commissary operation, developing a tremendous asset for our large mission population.

Q: There was inflation in Mexico, too.

WATSON: Oh, yes. It was off the charts. Run across the street mid-day to find out how many points the peso had moved by so we could take advantage of our dollars. Mexico is a wonderful country. At this point, speaking Spanish pretty well, I eventually got to the 4/4 level, able to use some of the slang and joke with employees.

Q: What about drugs? Were they a big problem when you were there?

WATSON: They were a big problem for DEA. But amongst our employees, national employees and American employees, there was no problem. You would think with so many of our younger officers growing up in a more permissive culture...thank God marijuana wasn't around when I was a kid. You would have thought that undoubtedly some of them were smoking, but certainly not to any noticeable extent. But if they had smoked in the past, why wouldn't they have smoked?

Q: How about terrorism? Were there any incidents?

WATSON: Yes, we had a few incidents. We were cautious. I'm less paranoid than some, but I may also be a little less sensitive than I ought to be. We had one small bomb go off just adjacent to the embassy and the Maria Isabel Hotel next door. But it was a small bomb. It went off on a Saturday afternoon while I was there, as a matter of fact. It was adjacent to the surrounding wall on the side where my office was. Terrorism was not really a big problem, but there were occasional incidents.

Security was a normal concern regarding the conduct of Americans and our American staff. Let me say that as concerns the Marine security guards, we had had particular problems with several Marine security guards in Mexico for several years prior to my tour. But the Marines in Mexico City during my short stint there were much better trained, more committed, and much more dependable. We had only one or two significant incidences with the Marines during my time.

Another thing we did while I was there, thanks completely to my wife, Evelyn, was learning to scuba dive. We began our training at 6:00 am at the American school swimming pool, over about six weeks, three mornings every week. Then we eventually scuba dove off the Vera Cruz coast in the Gulf, then later Baja, Cozumel and Cancun.

Q: It was great for relaxation.

WATSON: Oh, yes. We both became certified scuba divers.

Q: During that period, President Reagan came to Mexicali, as I recall.

WATSON: He certainly did.

Q: Did that involve the Administrative Section?

WATSON: Oh, absolutely, from top to bottom.

Q: Did you have to go up to Mexicali?

WATSON: Yes, several times prior to the visit, and of course during the visit. The visit took place on January 3, 1986. So, we went up there before Christmas. I took off around Christmas for a few days leave in the DC area, and returned prior to the visit. My wife departed post that previous summer to return to her work in the DC area. I don't think anybody will ever say that a presidential visit wasn't successful. Was it a successful visit? I think so. It went well on the administrative side.

Q: Ambassador Gavin was still there at the time?

WATSON: Oh, yes. I left Mexico in August of 1986, at tour end. Gavin left in June, I think it was. I don't think I've ever met anyone who had a more evident ego. And he loved the pomp and circumstance, attention, and adulation, and he got a lot of it. Even his farewell ceremony, sort of bidding adieu, waving from the small private plane that took him away. But Gavin knew how to move. He certainly knew how to move. The embassy limo was always out there on the tarmac at the foot of the ramp and all that folderol. I got to know the airport quite well. In point of fact, I am guilty of abusing a variety of regulations. I knew good and well that Gavin had a couple of daughters who visited him there from time to time. One of them lived with him for a while. I knew that the ambassador's limousine and the embassy driver would pick her up at school regularly. I never tried to stop it. I grimaced and growled and bellyached to myself. I never said anything to Gavin about it. I have to admit that early on, he cowed me quite a bit. Subsequent to my month there, he didn't much deal with me. I took Lyman on, head on, in Lyman's office one day early in my tour. I chewed him up one side and down the other. I called on Gavin and told him of the contretemps, and that Lyman was dysfunctional and ruining what could otherwise be an excellent mission. Gavin just rolled his eyes. What I said to Gavin effectively was, "I'm not leaving here. I am too good. You and this mission need me. I'll do good work for you. But that son of a bitch, Lyman, he is the problem for you here in getting a team built of people working towards the same ends that you want," or something along that line.

Q: Summing up your tour of Mexico, the major problem when you arrived was morale at the embassy.

WATSON: Oh, Lord! We had to curtail the tour of the narcotics coordinator when I arrived, and help him get reassigned. By way of counsel I told him, "Look, there are two ways you can go. You can stay here and get cut to ribbons, or you can leave." He left.

Q: Was that because the ambassador didn't like him?

WATSON: Lyman and the ambassador and Drew Arena. The economic counselor, who had risen to the highest rank of economic counselors, they wanted him out. Lyman as the acting DCM called me, telling me either he left agreeably or he would be "fired" the same as the narcotics officer. This was all within a period of four or five days following my arrival. The economic counselor had been in the Foreign Service maybe 30 years. He asked me what I thought he should do. I said, "Well, it depends on how strong your spine is. If you've got some problems with Lyman or the Ambassador, go and talk to either or both. I don't think this is going to work for you. They don't want you here, I think you're better off leaving." I believe he did meet with one or the other, and decided to curtail his tour. I vaguely recall that each of these officers received abbreviated performance evaluations upon departure, neither especially negative, just lukewarm.

Q: They didn't get sandbagged, in other words.

WATSON: They didn't get sandbagged. But had they stayed, they sure as hell would have.

Q: Let me ask you the final question. The Department of State must have been aware that the embassy in Mexico City was having these problems. Were there any echoes from here, any guidance, or didn't they want to take on the ambassador?

WATSON: Gavin was a friend of Reagan.

Q: Perhaps that answers my question.

WATSON: That answers your question.

Q: It's too bad when good people are caught in a situation like that though.

WATSON: It really is. And we had some fine officers and staff there.

Q: When you left Mexico after three exciting years there, you went to a different part of the world with different problems.

WATSON: Oh, yes, and it was reluctantly that I went.

Q: How did this come about?

WATSON: Well, the way this came about is, owing to this inferiority complex about my intellectual acumen and my lack of education as compared to a lot of officers, some hang-up I had in my core, I had decided earlier in my career that I didn't want to go to the National War College, National Defense University, but instead wanted to go into the Senior Seminar. Partly I wanted to go to the Senior Seminar since Dick Fox, a dear old friend, and Bill Calderhead, a colleague of some years, had both attended the seminar and thought it wonderful. So, indeed, from Mexico, I was being assigned to the Senior Seminar. George Vest (Director General of the Foreign Service, a wonderful man) had once called and asked me to take care of a particular personnel problem there in Mexico. That was about a year before I left. I was not able totally to fix that problem, and that problem still has not been fixed. It's still with the Foreign Service. But I did what I could. But anyway, as I was about to depart post George Vest called and said, "Doug, you can't go to the Senior Seminar, somebody just retired, an administrative counselor in Pakistan. Ambassador Deane Hinton is there, he wants you as his administrative counselor. Arnie Raphel is going to replace him. Arnie also wants you as his administrative counselor. Pakistan is very important. You can't go to the Senior Seminar." I said, "But... But... But... That is not fair. I don't want to do that." He said, "Look, I'll make a deal with you. You go to Pakistan for a year and then you can go to the seminar." I said, "You can't do that." He said, "Of course I can." And indeed, that is what eventually happened.

To make a long story short, off we went to Pakistan. Talk about things being tough...you bounce your wife to Pakistan for a year. Working for Deane Hinton was wonderful. We had this fine compound, this embassy building, some embassy housing on the compound, a club, the Marine quarters on the compound, the ambassador's residence on the compound, there were four tennis courts on the compound. It was like nothing I had ever had before.

Q: But that was mainly because we had had that terrible incident in 1979.

WATSON: In 1979, exactly. Deane was wonderful to work for, as was his deputy, John McCarthy. I didn't have much to do compared with what I had had in Mexico, and the tour was relatively a piece of cake. The setting was wonderful. The Margalla Hills surround Islamabad. My biggest concerns were the consulates in Karachi and Lahore and near the Afghanistan border, Peshawar. Peshawar was in dire straits. Physically, the consulate was a disaster. The housing was bad. Lahore was not quite as bad. Karachi was fine. After all, Karachi once had been the embassy. It was reasonably well staffed. Karachi was not a pleasant place, but trying to support our folks at a level that they deserved compared to the embassy, which was very well cared for, was a big challenge. There was a little bit of corruption with Pakistani folks here and there, a few problems along that line. Some security at the embassy, the installation of razor ribbon around the tops of the perimeter wall. One of these first hydraulic gates that we had where you rolled in and the barrier went up or came down

Q: It sometimes worked.

WATSON: It sometimes worked. Deane Hinton referred to it, I think, as the "Moghul gate." He had words with me...he had words with me the first time the barrier came up under his car while he was in it. Appropriately, he suddenly showed up in my office giving me "what for." He was a man with a fine dry sense of humor. On another occasion, I don't remember precisely the issue we were discussing, but it was Ambassador Hinton and John McCarthy and I. McCarthy had told me that the Ambassador wanted something or other done, a security issue I believe. So, I went in and met with both of them because I had a substantially different point of view. I told the ambassador that I thought he was wrong and we ought to do Y instead of X. He said, "Why do you think that?" I told him. He said, "No. I think you're wrong, we're going to do X." I said, "I don't think you understood me. I think you're wrong. It will be a big mistake." He said something along the lines of, "We're going to do X and that's it." I said, "Mr. Ambassador..." He said, "No. That's it." I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I know you're a reasonable man. I want to make my point again." He said, "Stop. That's it." John McCarthy turned to me and said, "Doug, I think you ought to stop." I said, "I can't. Let me tell you one more time, Mr. Ambassador. This is why we ought to do Y." He listened again to some 30 seconds on my part. He again said, "No." That was it. But I had a hearing. He listened. That was the important thing. To make a long story short, John McCarthy came to me shortly before Deane's departure, Deane was leaving in June or so. Arnie Raphel, replacing him, was going to arrive shortly thereafter. John came to me in March or April and said, "The ambassador wants you to be his DCM in Costa Rica." Another one of my big mistakes. Costa Rica was a place I had always wanted to go. I would have loved to be Deane Hinton's DCM. But I wanted to go to the Senior Seminar. If I had had any brains, I would have gone to my wife and said, "Hey, look. I've got these two propositions. What do you think" and we would have gone to Costa Rica, she as always providing wise counsel. I said immediately to McCarthy, "No, I want to go to the Senior Seminar. It's something I've wanted to do." It was very shortsighted on my part. Who knows?

Deane was a wonderful guy. He was noted for his poker playing. Deane would go off to a dinner, to a reception. He would show up at the poker game at 10:00, 10:30, 11:00, play for an hour and a half, have a brandy or whatever, smoke a cigar, and then we'd all go home. I used to play tennis, partnering with Deane, or opposing him. We would play doubles. I was not a bad player. I was sure as hell better than Hinton. His knees were giving him trouble. But I remember once, opposing him, a ball that I had hit to him he called out at the baseline. I said, "That wasn't out." He said, "It was out." I said, "You may be the ambassador, but it was NOT out. It was in!" He grudgingly conceded the point. He was a superb sport. Hinton always left me smiling, whatever the situation. Then of course, Arnie Raphel and his wife, Nancy Ely, came to post after Deane had left. Arnie was markedly different from Deane, and such a highly admired officer. I had never known him, aside from a brief meeting years earlier.

Q: He had experience in South Asia, too.

WATSON: Oh, yes, with experience. He served previously in Iran and somewhere else. His wife was a delight. They were extremely hospitable and welcoming to us, sought my counsel on administrative issues. My wife and I and Arnie and Nancy played some tennis together. They gave us a very nice departure dinner. Fine folk.

Also, we had a very large CODEL while Deane was still there, the CODEL itself, along with several Hill staffers, Bob Lamb, Mary Ryan, and other luminaries from the Department. I took everyone, all of them, up to the chancery roof. We all crawled up that exit ladder from the communications section, not only better to demonstrate what had happened in the 1979 burning of the embassy, but also to show how the Marines could rappel from the roof, how prepared we were. We displayed actively our burn procedures. That was a very good CODEL. That evening at the residence in the middle of his remarks, Hinton, bless him, with this assembled mass of representatives, said to me, "Well Doug, why don't you brief the members about our resource situation here?" Off the top of my head, I gave them about five minutes about our needs, and my overview of funding by the Department. It was a wonderful opportunity for me. Obviously, it was a display of Deane's confidence in me. The next day, John McCarthy called me up to his office and told me how impressed he had been with my briefing. That was nice to hear. That was the style of Hinton and McCarthy; forthcoming.

Oh, and I remember a wonderful...Hinton at a full country team meeting in the bubble one morning. Hinton tore into a particular counselor of embassy (who later became a very successful officer and ambassador), and the officer responded, and Hinton tore into him again, in full country team. Later that morning, I heard loud voices emanating from the ambassador's office as these two guys went at it tooth and nail. The matter apparently was resolved. But Hinton could be explosive.

Q: Well, there are some ambassadors you can talk back to and others you'd better not.

What was your relation with the Pakistanis?

WATSON: Oh, I was there just a short time, less than a year. I had a good relationship with the government authorities and particularly with the police, the city planning commission. We had such a large property there. Things that we did that had to do with the electrical system or the sewage system or waste or whatever, that was something we always had to bring the Pakistanis in on because we needed their support to make it work. They were very cooperative, a very attractive people, too. Pakistan was really very foreign to me and to my wife. We did some hiking there. We also traveled up to Gilgit, Hunza, and a couple of other places up north, in small planes that maneuvered hither and yon, snaking through the mountain passes. We went over, of course, to Kathmandu and Delhi. We got to Lahore, Peshawar, and Karachi. The Pakistanis were a very fine people. The souk, the bazaar, in Rawalpindi was very interesting, unique. We had been in souks before in Egypt, but Pakistan was quite different. It was a wonderful tour. It was not difficult. Deane Hinton and John McCarthy were superb. Our living conditions were good and the tour was short.

Q: What was the effect of the war that was going on in Afghanistan at the time?

WATSON: I think there was a lot of our involvement concerning which we probably are still closed mouthed.

Q: Well, the paper has been full of the fact that the CIA was giving supplies to Afghanistan.

WATSON: The Agency can speak better to that than I can.

Q: You probably had a large station in Islamabad.

WATSON: I would rather not comment.

Q: Did we have a lot of military there in the country?

WATSON: No, not very many. A small military. Of course, after we left and Arnie Raphel was killed along with President Zia, I immediately cabled Nancy Ely, Arnie's wife, from Haiti, to "Come on down and stay with us if you like." She is a wonderful lady, and now is our ambassador to Zagreb.

Q: And she is a fine person.

How serious did the embassy consider the Pakistani nuclear program to be or was that much discussed when you were there?

WATSON: That wasn't much discussed to my knowledge, but then there was much I was not privy to. It was very serious and it was something that I'm sure Deane had in hand and was working with at the Assistant Secretary Level.

Q: We had a science attache in Pakistan or not?

WATSON: No, we didn't have a science attaché^{1/2}. But let me add as an aside that a couple of folks who were there later had their own missions. Mike Lemmon, John Wolfe, and Lauralee Peters all became ambassadors. It was a pretty good staff.

Q: Any other comments about your year in Pakistan?

WATSON: No. Then I went to the Senior Seminar.

Q: In 1987, you went to the Senior Seminar.

WATSON: Yes. 1987 1988. It was a fine year. Ambassador Jim Bullington headed the seminar. He opened up the process so that we could do a lot of things that we wanted to do ourselves, not things that were designed for us, but rather by us. There were 29 of us, probably half were State officers, and the others from other USG agencies. It was a pretty good mix of folks, folks who went on to varying different degrees of success. There were guys who became ambassadors (Chuck Baquet and Dave Dunford), as well as none other than Felix Bloch, who later was indicted for passing secrets in and out of Vienna. It was a fine year. I feel the seminar must have been discussed to death by others who contributed to the Oral History Project, but I will say that for me it was a tremendous eye opener into other agencies, but particularly into the military, with which I had had already a fair amount of experience. Visiting so many military installations and programs, and getting a better feel for the special forces capabilities, the Delta Program, and our missile readiness, the training that the different services would undergo. After all, to be aboard a nuclear submarine and that kind of thing...to see the way the different services dealt with what now are called "diversity issues." To see how they dealt with women in their services. To appreciate to a much heightened degree how warfare had changed technologically, from being in military operation centers, or at missile sites, or at NORAD, wherever we went. Also living with a Minnesota dairy farm family for a day. Then reading only today in the newspaper how "informed authorities" are concerned with children going to school so early in the morning because they're not ready, they're sleep deprived. What poppycock! What balderdash! These young farm folks get up at four and five in the morning to go to work, and then go to school. It's very basic and simple. These farm kids do what needs being done, they must...their families depend on them.

Q: But they probably haven't stayed up until 11:30 watching TV.

WATSON: That's right. That's because they have to get up at four o'clock in the morning. So, they're not wasting their time watching some of these inane programs. But that was a wonderful experience. Riding around Detroit with Detroit Police Officers, and witnessing a couple of domestic disputes and some crack cocaine situations better to appreciate what life could be like in the vicinity of Wayne State. And my leading our trip down to El Paso, Ciudad Juarez, and Mexico City, my particular trip. Also an issue on which I led the discussion, and gathered the expert participants dealing with biospheric diversity and environmental issues. There was excellent exposure to a lot of high ranking folks from the Center for Disease Control, the EPA, the Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Agriculture. There were very good people in the program amongst the students, amongst the officers, civilian and military.

Q: Did you have to do a special paper?

WATSON: We had the option...we could do a paper, or we could make an oral presentation of a project we undertook. I did the oral presentation. I also worked over about a month periodically (probably eight visits) with a program which Arlington County called the "Frail Elderly," working with these folks in daycare centers for frail elderly. I talked with the residents, helping them with different activities, participating in crafts and games. Then for my month long project, I returned to the high school I had attended in Arlington and worked as a teaching assistant in math, history, English, and biology, assisting ninth and tenth grade students who came from "disadvantaged home environments," or who were otherwise disadvantaged owing to other kinds of personal problems. It was appalling to see the attention spans and limited interest of these students. The difference I made was so nominal as to be almost forgotten, in honesty. But I tried. I talked with them about my own education and life experiences. I worked with them on papers they were writing, and with research in the school library.

Q: Did your Spanish language come in handy that way?

WATSON: I purposely didn't use it. There were a number of Hispanic students in our classes. This was in January -February of 1988. The Hispanic percentage of students in the Arlington system was less than it is now, though substantial, as was the Asian-American percentage, mostly of Vietnamese roots. It was so disheartening to see the weak academic prowess of these youngsters, and to appreciate how much effort the teachers had to make to have any impact at all.

But then also on a regular basis over the course of these four weeks, I was able to attend about ten Advanced Placement (AP) classes in civics, history, math, and English. Those kids were dynamite! They were so impressive. But the contrast with the poorly performing students was sad. In our Senior Seminar, we had wonderful exposure to subjects such as elementary and secondary education, recognizing how badly we are failing in that area and how we are failing to solve our drug abuse problems. We are not very successful. This should be a concern to all of us.

Q: I gather you got a great deal out of your year at the seminar.

WATSON: A tremendous amount, yes. Not enough to overcome not having had the good sense instead to elect to be DCM in Costa Rica. But on the heels of the seminar, I was assigned as DCM to Haiti, where my first ambassador for the better part of a year was Brunson McKinley. Then for the second part of my three year tour our ambassador was Al Adams. These two guys were poles apart. McKinley was difficult to reason with, quite aloof, not given to listening a lot to those of us in the trenches, those who were probably less bright or educated than he, less quick, less intellectual. He thought that he knew more than most anybody. Adams, on the other hand, I could say virtually anything to, and he would take it under consideration, work it over, exchange ideas, debate, argue.

During my time there, we had a couple of coups, countercoups, elections, this, that...

Q: Had you had any special training before you went down to Haiti?

WATSON: No, aside from the DCM orientation course and a little brush-up in French and French is not what they speak in Haiti. They speak Creole. The elite speak French and Creole. You've never seen such a racist society. There is a very small elite which is occasionally white, mostly mulatto, lighter in color, and then there is everybody else, the majority of Haitians. Those lighter in color and those who are white are terribly racist. There is a "big house" mentality. It's an ugly thing to see. It is a more subtle racism, just part of the fabric of the society. The elites see the Black masses as incapable of achieving, incapable of growth. Those who are black know that. That's the way it is.

Q: I saw a bit of it in the Philippines. It wasn't nearly as bad there, but it was there. I called it the "five percent and the 95 percent."

WATSON: It's something like that in Haiti, except that there is an even smaller percent constituting the "elites," I think. The "middle class" I would guess is probably much smaller than that of the Philippines.

Q: How did you and the ambassadors divide your duties? Or did you?

WATSON: Yes. I was the inside guy and they were the outside guys. McKinley didn't speak much Creole, very little. His comprehension though of Creole was probably not too bad. His French was very good. Adams' French was fine, but he learned Creole. He poured himself into it. He got out into the hinterland. He really loved the job. Adams was a piece of work. They both now have left the Foreign Service. Subsequent to Haiti, Al went to Peru as ambassador. Then he went up and headed the United Nations Association of the United States for about a year or a year and a half. Now he's out in California. I think he's seeking to work in the legal area once he passes the California bar, or he may work with an NGO on some progressive issue.

Brunson came back to Washington and spent some time working in refugee affairs. I think Brunson must have blotted his copybook, not having "succeeded" in Haiti. How can one "succeed" in that place? After Haiti refugees and immigration matters really constituted his career over the course over perhaps four or five years in the Department. Now he's the Director General of the International Organization of Migration in Geneva. So, he's doing just fine after a very good State career.

Q: What was the size of the embassy?

WATSON: The embassy was not large. AID was substantially larger than State and other agencies combined. AID's facility was better. Their housing was better. Their resources were better. Their entire support mechanism was better. The Foreign Service National staff was better. The contrast was incredible. They were the ones with the resources and they were the ones to whom the Haitians listened. Haiti would constitute a textbook opportunity for developmental assistance if we actually cared about Haiti and the Haitians, which we don't. That is to say, Haiti is close enough to the U.S. We could help that country change over about 50 years. You would have to develop a national language which had utility outside of Haiti, i.e., French or English, preferable English. You'd have to reform completely the educational, legal, judicial, health delivery, all those systems. Then, of course, there is the problem of agriculture. But you could make it work because the Haitian people are quite capable and hard working. There is nothing comparable to seeing Haitian women in the marketplace in downtown Port au Prince throughout the day working, sweating, grinding out a living, living in very primitive conditions 5, 10 or 20 miles away, a distance which they largely walk every morning and every night. It's just not to be believed. I'm fond of saying the following...it's not quite true, but it's almost true..."there is no such thing as a fat, truly dark Haitian." The resources are so thin and so are the poor. Living conditions are indeed bad. AID folks who served in Africa are not at all struck by what they find in Haiti, because you find a lot of the same or worse poverty levels in African countries. Of course, having served in Egypt, Vietnam, Ecuador, Pakistan, I've seen poverty at different levels but nothing quite like Haiti.

But the AID mission was very important there. We tried to be as equitable as we could to make AID's accoutrements, resources, housing, and so forth not excessive to of what everybody else in the mission had. Obtaining decent housing was very difficult there. I talked with you the other day about various and sundry problems that I had down there, which had to do with housing for a special assistant to the ambassador for whom we rented a home which was considered too large by FBO (there was also a particular contract that we had for gardening which was considered excessive, although it was the same kind of contract that the embassy had used for years). The previous very large "special assistant house" had been rented for his predecessors over several years. The house FBO found too large was in fact substantially smaller than the house of the predecessor special assistants. The upshot of all that is that I was called on the carpet by the IG, who came down, found me guilty in both cases, the house and the gardening contracts, and subsequently published in its quarterly publication that a "DCM in the Caribbean had been found guilty of these..."

Q: Why you? Why not the administrative counselor?

WATSON: Because there wasn't any administrative counselor there for the first three months following my arrival. Why was that? Because that's the way Haiti was staffed, with great difficulty. We didn't have people to fill positions. So, I had to take the lead on a couple of things including housing the special assistant so he could do his job, an important job. Anyway, to make a long story short, I couldn't believe that this IG business was happening to me. We had had the embassy's appropriately representative (all agencies) housing committee rule on this particular housing lease. The vote was eight to one in favor of renting the house; I abstained.

After the IG ruling, I was supposed to be docked a day's pay, I think, and my file would be annotated for a year, saying I had committed this particular sin. So, I appealed the IG decision. So the Director General in effect said, "Okay, we'll just annotate your file, but no fine." So, I, very angry with the IG's foolishness, appealed the decision over the course of a year or so. I was angry as hell with the decisions of the IG and the DG. Here we were in this lousy environment, busing our humps to get work done, and I had to give additional effort to dispute what I thought was a frivolous finding.

Q: Did you have to go back to Washington?

WATSON: No, I did it all by writing. It was such a pain in the neck. Anyway, so the grievance part of Personnel wrote back and said in effect, "Yes, we agree. You are not guilty of infraction X, but you are still guilty of infraction Y, the commentary will stay in your file for a year." Okay. I then appealed to the Foreign Service Grievance Board, and the Board took months to reach a decision. The Grievance Board found the IG decisions to be without basis. They informed me of this after I had returned to Washington and they informed the IG that all the records should be destroyed, and that the IG had ruled incorrectly.

So, I asked for a meeting with Sherman Funk, the then Inspector General. And his legal counsel instead responded, asking me, "What is this about?" I said, "Look, this is what happened. You charged me with these things. I was found not culpable. I want to meet with the Inspector General." The Office of the Inspector General hadn't known that I had been found not guilty by the Foreign Service Grievance Board because that is the way the Grievance Board is supposed to work. It took me two weeks to get an appointment with Funk. I figured I was going to sit down and meet with Funk, you know, a couple of honest men, face to face. Funk was there with his legal counsel, his staff assistant, and both with paper and pencil at the ready. I just tell him that they were flat out wrong. You were wrong on this count. You were wrong on that count. This is why you were wrong in the first place. This is why the Board found you were wrong. Here are the findings of these boards. Funk responded, "No, no, no, no. I still think that what you did was wrong" I said, "I don't agree with you. Not only that, you colored my record."

Following Haiti I had been sent to the UN to be the ARA representative. I was sent up to the UN as the key guy for ARA. Me, the key guy? Tom Pickering is our ambassador? His deputy is Alec Watson? Both have extensive Latin American experience. Who is kidding whom?

Q: I wanted to ask you something about the political setup in Haiti. In those days, I gather General Namphy moved out and General Avril... What were our Embassy's relations with these people?

WATSON: Very close. They had always been very close. We didn't lack for access. First we had Namphy. He had gone by the time I came. Prosper Avril had taken over in a coup. There was Avril, a general, as the president, and there was the foreign minister, General Herard Abraham. Despite anything else these scallywags might have done, our DEA agents on one occasion confiscated on the south coast of Haiti 50 kilos of cocaine. Avril, upon learning about it (McKinley was out of the county), called me in. I sat down with Avril and the foreign minister and they said to me, "Your DEA agents working with our police have 50 kilos of cocaine. We want it out of here. Can you take it off our hands? It's not going to stay where it is. If it stays it's going to be taken and used." To make a long story short, at my request the DEA flies a plane down from Miami. Our agents go out, pick up the cocaine, put it on the plane, and fly it back to Miami where it is destroyed. The Haitian Government's action for me was quite a surprise.

Q: A country turning to an embassy to do this.

WATSON: Yes. The thing is, the country was so rotten and so corrupt and this cocaine would have been worth a great deal of money. Now, did they do this so that we would think that they were good fellows, and everything else that which might go wrong we would ignore or what? Anyway, that was just one little vignette.

Q: Did we know Father Aristide, who came along?

WATSON: Not very well. We knew him a little bit, our AID people mostly. At the time of the election in 1991, of our embassy pundits willing to voice an opinion on election eve as to who would be elected, we weren't very accurate in our assessment, not very accurate at all. We had very little feel for what "the people" thought. Very few of us had a good indication of how the Haitian electorate, the people, by and large felt about Aristide as compared with other candidates, whom we found substantially more acceptable. I am couching my observation in very diplomatic terms.

Q: In other words, we got it wrong.

WATSON: Yep.

Q: What about Cuban influence? Was there any?

WATSON: No. We would try to find it. There was hardly any. Nobody has much use for Haiti in the Caribbean, or anywhere in Latin America. The Cubans certainly don't. There was some interest, but it was very nominal.

Q: Was there any violence directed at Americans or at the embassy?

WATSON: No, never. Haiti was a rough place. Life there for non-working spouses was very difficult. The school was not good. Medical facilities were appalling. Housing was marginally acceptable. The quality of domestic help was not good. It was very difficult for dependents. Our American embassy community consequently was very close. Morale was one of my responsibilities and one of the things I think I handled reasonably well. We would use our own home for get-togethers on a regular basis. That was constructive, but it was a difficult post.

Violence? A lot of folks, most of whom were white, both dependents and employees, found the environment that Haiti presented potentially threatening. And when you see a lot of very dark Haitians on the streets rioting, or in fact burning people in tires soaked with oil or gas, it's frightening. We would see that from time to time the remains of those activities, what was left in the streets, the burnt tires, the stones, the corpses. You could envision a Haitian mob getting out of hand and that caused people a lot of concern. As a matter of fact, we had a potential evacuation later in my tour. When folks realized however that under those evacuation conditions they would have to pay for their own departures and returns because we had only approval from State for a limited evacuation, their concern pretty well evaporated. That is to say, many were somewhat concerned, but not very often feeling real duress.

There were very few recreational opportunities. There were almost no entertainment opportunities. You pretty well had to do for yourself. But the States were not far, so folks could get out of country at not too great an expense. We had a lot of junior officers, a lot of consular business, and we had a chance to work with our Junior Officers. Marvelous Junior Officers came through that consular section, with occasional brief stints in the economic or political sections.

Q: What about the boat people? Did we have many problems with them?

WATSON: Yes, because boats would sink offshore, often not very far offshore. This was always sad. It was a shame. The overwhelming majority of those who left by boat, by whatever means, were in most cases not "victims" of a harsh military regime or harsh, brutal authorities. They were seeking a better life, a better economic opportunity, escaping Haiti's grinding, brutal poverty. That is not fashionable to say, but it's true. Americans in the U.S. have been led to believe the "boat people" were only a consequence of brutal leaders. Clearly there were indeed abuses by the military and police of those who were politically active. But the "boat people" did not constitute a part of the "political class". These folks were simply in dire economic straits.

Q: When President Avril stepped down, we flew him out of country.

WATSON: We sure did. That was a great success for Ambassador Al Adams. We sent accompanying Avril a young officer, Hoyt Yee, who will in time be an outstanding officer, already is (he is relatively junior; I guess he's been in 12 years or so by now). Al Adams did some tough negotiating with Avril, coordinating closely with the Department, with Bernie Aronson, the Assistant Secretary. We helped get rid of Avril. It was quite something, leading eventually (there was an interim president, Ertha Trouillot, a woman) to elections which were successful. Aristide indeed became president and then, of course, was thrown out of the country in late 1991, returning in 1994 after the international intervention, choreographed by the U.S.

Q: Were you there for the visit of Vice President Quayle?

WATSON: Yes, right at the very end of my tour, late August, 1991. As a matter of fact, I left the day after he departed. I held off my departure until his visit. There was an accompanying gaggle of White House staffers. Bill Crystal was one of them, now a commentator and an editor. We all sat down Aristide, Aronson, the Vice President, and the Ambassador, Bernie Aronson quietly back-benching as appropriate, but leaving the lead to the VP and the Ambassador. I was able to have some input which was useful in the discussions.

Q: As you left Haiti, what were your sentiments? Did you think that country would ever get it together or not?

WATSON: I had no doubt whatsoever in my mind that they would never get it together. As long as we continued to do for the Haitians what they would have to do for themselves, there was no hope for them ever doing it for themselves. If you are brought up in an environment which is corrupt and rotten, and you then go to replace the corrupt and rotten people with people who are not yet corrupt and rotten, those new people become corrupt and rotten because those are the models that have preceded them. So, I had no hope whatsoever that it would ever change without something very drastic, such as a 50 year serious developmental assistance program. Alas, we are in no mood to undertake such a program. Haiti is doomed to further poverty and collapse.

Q: When you left Haiti in 1991, you went to New York to the General Assembly. What did you do there?

WATSON: Oh, that was just a little three month blip. I primarily worked for the U.S. Mission, coordinating efforts with the representatives of Caribbean and Central American nations. Alec Watson and Tom Pickering handled the important issues. I did very little, nothing of consequence. I worked with a young officer by the name of Joe Manso, who handled the Latin America portfolio. There were talks going on concerning El Salvador. Those went on without me. I was really just an accoutrement. I was sent up there to help wherever I could, where they needed a gofer, a "senior" diplomat to handle mundane matters. So, I did some liaison work and talked with different governments about how important their vote was as concerned Cuba or the "Zionism is racism" resolution issue. I like to think that my particular role made some difference, but in fact I don't think it did. Of course, living in New York for three months was nice. You get caught up in the "heady" UN atmosphere, having important people visit. Working with Ambassador Tom Pickering was marvelous, observing the way he and his deputy Alec Watson ran the mission. And also George Moose, who came up as well for his second UN mission stint. We had some very impressive people. It became quite clear to me that there was more to the Bureau of International Organizations and our UN mission than had met my eye. I also came to have a deeper appreciation of the U.S. mission to the OAS (Organization of American States). Not fully beknownst to me, I was up for consideration to be the deputy to Ambassador Luigi Einaudi, who at that time was our ambassador to the OAS (USOAS, lodged essentially in ARA). That was something in which I had expressed some interest, but I was not keenly interested and that opportunity went by the boards, i.e., I imagine Einaudi did not select me.

I was beginning to have increasing trouble with a knee problem at that time. At the end of the UN session around Christmas, I returned to Arlington, and had orthoscopic surgery in January. It took longer than I anticipated to recover. I returned to the Department, that UN TDY affair having ended, and bounced around in several different offices doing work of little importance. I did some work on POW/MIA issues in which Congress had interest. I worked closely with DAS Ken Quinn in the East Asia Bureau gathering data, which essentially meant going through a lot of files. It wasn't quite as bad as it sounds, but it was very disheartening in terms of real responsibility.

Q: Had your Vietnam experience helped at all in this work?

WATSON: A bit.

I took up Sherman Funk, the Inspector General, on his offer to accept me on the Inspector General (IG) staff. I did this for one principal reason. I had always wanted to do a stint with the IG. I had also wanted to work in BEX, and I had wanted to work on the Hill. But the reason I went to the Office of the IG was to try to regain my credibility by demonstrating to people who knew through the "corridor talk" that whatever I had been accused of in Haiti didn't stop me from being an Inspector with the Office of the Inspector General. It enabled me also to tell people, "Hey, look, I'm in the IG, which had found me flawed. They were incorrect and this was demonstrated through two review procedures." So, I worked in the IG for about four months, long enough to do what I wanted to do: learn the IG process, go overseas, and be the deputy on a team that went to Budapest, Bucharest, and Tirana. I headed the team while inspecting Albania, and was Deputy for Romania and Hungary. Then while my small team was in Albania, the other team leader and half the team inspected Bulgaria. My wife accompanied me on the trip. It was a good experience. A number of the inspectors were very impressive, quite balanced and fair. I never felt in any of the three inspections with which I was involved that we gave an optimally full inspection as the posts deserved. I never felt that we were working with enough information. We uncovered some failings at the post, we uncovered some strengths. We made recommendations which were constructive. Our recommendations certainly helped the home regional Bureau understand better what the problems were at the posts. But I think you need more time to be more fully apprised of the real strengths and weaknesses. It's like analysis anywhere. You come in and do it and you leave. The folks are left to deal with the problems. Well, that is the way the system is. It could be improved.

A lot of folks were upset when I asked out of the assignment. I said, "I really don't care. I want out." "Where are you going to go?" "I don't know. I don't care. Put me on somebody's over-complement roster, that's fine." In short, I saw the writing on the wall. I had pretty well topped out. I wasn't headed for bigger things.

So, I went on ARA'S over-complement roster and did some time in USOAS for about six months. While there I helped the OAS establish its mission in Haiti. I went to Haiti and provided some insight and counsel on different issues, working with Colin Granderson, a Trinidadian who was the OAS ambassador to Haiti, helping him and his team gain access at certain points, and perhaps to understand Haiti better. Granderson is a very competent diplomat, and he's now been there several years. I had very little to do with the embassy while I was there. I was also in Haiti when Ambassador Larry Pezzullo, the new State Department advisor on Haiti, came down. Subsequently, Ted McNamara, an outstanding officer, who was the deputy assistant secretary for Political Military Affairs, asked me to participate in a war gaming exercise at Camp Lejeune, which I did. Then in 1994 Ted asked me to go to Haiti as the political advisor to the commanding U.S. General of our international intervention troops. So, I was a political advisor to U.S. Army Major General David Meade. I didn't do too well with Meade, nor he with me. I was a little too outspoken for Meade's taste. I did quite well however with his U.S. Army Brigadier General, Dick Potter, who commanded the U.S. special forces mission. I spent a fair amount of time with General Potter in the field. The "Peter Principle" applied in Meade's case. He had reached a level beyond which he certainly should not have gone, and indeed he left the Army shortly after this mission. I did what I set out to do. I think I did a decent job as liaison prior to our actual intervention, initiating a relationship between Bill Swing, our ambassador to Haiti, and Meade. That developed well. It was interesting to be on the ground and watch the embassy be overwhelmed by the military. It had to be. It was such a resource poor embassy, bereft, and the going would have been difficult for whomever was ambassador. I was there for about six weeks. I returned to Washington once, did some briefings, and returned. Shortly thereafter I figured I had served my usefulness with our military team, and returned to the Department.

Q: Father Aristide was banished at that time, wasn't he?

WATSON: Oh, yes, he had been banished. I was there for his return surrounded by much hoopla. Those of us who knew Aristide fairly well reckoned that the future would be only "more of the same." After all, he had been elected by the people, in fair elections. I can't gainsay that.

Q: They had a rather love/hate relationship with him, didn't they?

WATSON: Yes. The wealthy class hated him; the "people" loved him. Aristide was a strong personality. Although he was a small man, not imposing at all, he was a powerful personality, stronger than most of us had recognized. Not to make light of what we did there, we made substantial changes during my tour, and certainly through the international intervention we made some changes, got rid of some thugs, devoted resources to this road, that hospital, or that inoculation program, a clean water supply, and other projects. But all this investment gets eaten up, swallowed over time because we're not serious about what we were doing there, we are not there for the long haul. I must say, on the other hand, the Department did a splendid job in making that military mission be "international". There was no question that the U.S. was at the core of it. It was our baby. But we received some substantial contributions from other nations. Certainly, the Canadians, the Brazilians, the Argentines. You know, when you color with that kind of an international brush, a couple dozen nations, then it gains a legitimacy.

Q: And you were there as political advisor?

WATSON: Yes, I was a political advisor, but you really have to make that a terribly small "p" because I think if General Meade were speaking, he wouldn't characterize my contributions as I do. I knew a good bit more about Haiti than Meade, and I had insights which were valuable. I think they were appreciated by a lot of people on his staff, a lot of colonels and general officers, and Hugh Shelton, now the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and Jay Johnson now the CNO. I think they appreciated my point of view. I had worked with both of them in the exercise at Lejeune and a follow-up in Norfolk. But I think Meade felt that I either spoke out too much, or that I was disinclined to think that he was right in some of his planning. So, I would intervene where I could, but he quickly discounted me, did not like me, and pretty much shut me out of his counsel. But that didn't mean that I couldn't provide counsel to a number of senior officers. Every now and then in a larger meeting because there was a morning briefing and an evening briefing - if something was significant to me, I would make a comment which might complement what Meade had said, or it might simply suggest another point of view, something that he might take into consideration. Some of these ideas indeed he took but ours was a poor relationship.

Something I forgot to mention earlier. A year or so previous to our 1994 intervention, when we had the wave of immigrants, boat people, from Haiti, I was assigned by Brunson McKinley and Phyllis Oakley, of the International Refugees and Migration Bureau, to Jamaica to be the political advisor to a Marine general who now is a Marine three star, Mike Williams, a strong leader, a wonderful guy. He was a one star at that time. It was the Marines who were running the operation out of Port Royal, a little south of Kingston. That is where we had the huge hospital ship, "The Comfort", where we would accept the boat people brought in by the Coast Guard, and offer them shelter, clean living conditions, meals and health services. Then we would assess them for possible political refugee status. The INS was also on board for the task. It was an extensive process. Randall Robinson was one of the folks who came down, director of TransAfrica. Again, I spoke frankly with him, to him. It was party line but I also believed it, that Haitians would be better served to remain in Haiti and go through an asylum process there to the degree that they could, rather than getting on these boats, few of which were seaworthy. While I served in Haiti, I had seen too many drown, and this was continuing to happen. Robinson felt that that flew right in the face of the humanitarian concerns we should have. He considered it also contrary to what Bill Gray, who had been the President's man on Haiti, felt about the process. So, that was unfortunate. Randall Robinson disliked and distrusted me from the outset of his short visit. Think he is quite a racist himself, rejecting my views in large part because I am white, and because he is not given to listen to reason. He thinks he understands Haiti better than those of us with the government.

Q: What were your lines of communication, of command, in Washington? Did you report back to PM or ARA?

WATSON: For the military intervention I reported back to PM and also to the Operations (Ops) Center. On the Haitian boat people, I reported to the Ops Center and to International Refugees and Migration. That was the way that operation worked. I tried to keep both of these entities informed as events developed. It was a substantial operation, quite intense.

Q: Interesting, I presume.

WATSON: Interesting, confusing. The Coast Guard was excellent, as was the Navy. The USS Comfort is as tall as a 12 story building.

Q: That is the hospital ship you were talking about.

WATSON: Fascinating.

Q: Were you there when President Clinton fired Larry Pezzullo?

WATSON: No. I was in Washington when Pezzullo got fired. Pezzullo is a piece of work. He is his own man. He came from humble origins and has a lot of confidence in his own skills and abilities. Then when I was in Haiti as a political advisor, my only avenue of reporting was through PM, and that office in PM which was doing that particular exercise. I would also be in touch with Ted McNamara, who was by then the PM Assistant Secretary, a colleague of mine, of the same Foreign Service Junior Officer class. I have to say that when I came into the Foreign Service at the ripe old age of 31, Ted was 24 and we all knew that he was going to be one of the successes in the Service. Lo and behold, he was.

Q: Were you there in Haiti when former President Carter, Colin Powell, and Sam Nunn came on their mission?

WATSON: No. I was up here. As a matter of fact, how this started for me is, when I was identified for the political advisor assignment, I had not been aware of all the planning that had gone on, although I had some inklings. Ted McNamara asked me if I would do that. I said, "I want to see the plan." So, I read the plan. I said, "This is a losing proposition. It's not going to work. But maybe I can make it better. I'm not doing anything else which is worthwhile. Okay." So, I went up to Fort Drum, where the 10th Mountain Division of the U.S. Army is located, stayed there, I think, for two nights, maybe one night. I went there after having gone to Fort McNair for the Sunday brief that we had all day with folks like Berger and Talbott. Then I went up to 10th Mountain for a couple of days. I got along very well with General Meade and with his second in command, General George Close, and with his command sergeant major, who was very important, as anybody who deals with the military knows. Then I flew down to Washington, had a quick brief, got some travel orders, did whatever I did, put together a couple of satchels full of clothes, flew to Lejeune commercial and then flew to Bragg military, then from Bragg down to Miami or thereabouts and on to the command ship. The commander of the fleet there was Admiral Jay Johnson. We all briefed that night. I think that's when Meade began to have doubts about me. During a discussion at a brief, I offered my opinion. Also, let me add that Jack Leonard, who previously had been the U.S. ambassador to Surinam, had suddenly been named political advisor to Hugh Shelton, who was going to command the overall operation. I was going to be the political advisor...Shelton was a four star and Meade was a two star. Jack Leonard of ambassadorial fame was all of a sudden... I said to myself, "Wait a minute. What is this stuff?" Well, Shelton had to have his political advisor. Had I known this previously I would not have opted inot for a second.

Q: Two political advisors.

WATSON: Yes. Leonard went down to Haiti and he was there for three, four or five days. Then he left and went back to the Department and I stayed. But the two POLAD business undercut anything that I thought I was going to be able to do. They could look to Leonard for the initial period, and not to me. But it was there in the bowels of the command ship where we had the briefing at 11:00 or 12:00 at night, whatever time it was that Sam Nunn, Colin Powell, and Jimmy Carter came to the accord with Cedras, the president, if you will, of Haiti. So, that is when we learned of the accord. I immediately got on the ship's phone and talked to Bill Swing, our ambassador in Port au Prince, told him where we were, that we were steaming in. The next day we all transferred from the command ship to the carrier early in the morning. I kept asking Meade the night before, "When will I be going in? With whom and how?" He essentially put me off. So, I put my baggage back with other baggage, got on a helicopter with my briefcase, which had the only things I needed, flew in with the initial wave of helicopters, and landed on the air force tarmac. All our troops were sprawled out on the tarmac with their guns at the ready.

Q: Your briefcase was at the ready though.

WATSON: My briefcase was at the ready. I went over and saw Bill Swing and the Haitian commanding officer of the airport. I chatted with Bill a minute. Then the next wave of helicopters came in, and then came General Meade in the next wave.

Q: And you greeted the general.

WATSON: And Jack Leonard flew in with him. So, I just walked with (a couple of feet behind) Bill Swing up to the general and they met. He said, "Dr. Livingston, I presume," as I recall. They hadn't met before. We had the initial brief there in the airport baggage section. The press was all over the place.

Q: I think this was a Sunday, if I recall, of September 1994.

WATSON: You know, it may have been a Sunday. It's interesting how you completely lose track of what day it is. A marvelous thing to see and appreciate the logistics chain involved in an operation like that. From the airport, we all went down to the Haitian military headquarters, a location I knew well, close by the presidential palace. I knew General Cedras and the other Haitian officers. There were in that small room about 20 of us: Bob Pastor, who was Carter's main man on Latin America, Ambassador Swing, General Meade, General Shelton, all the Haitian generals and colonels, a number of others, advisors, the U.S. Defense attaché¹/₂ there. And I as the "political advisor" to the commander of the 10th Mountain Division. It was Ambassador Swing who was leading our delegation. So, in response to one of the Haitian colonel's comment about the noise, the disturbance, and the fright that the helicopters had caused in the immediate area, I said, "Mr. Ambassador, do you mind if I make a suggestion?" He said, "No, of course not." So, I did. Well, I think my intervention didn't sit real well with Meade, who figured that I was Meade's man, not the Ambassador's. Our relationship went downhill from there. To watch our military establish their operation, from communications, the transport, the setting up of tents, eating facilities and lodging facilities—all this was really impressive.

Q: And public relations facilities.

WATSON: Yes. It was really quite a marvel. Years later, when I noted our work in Kosovo or Bosnia, I could feel what that must be like there on the ground.

So, that was pretty much my last assignment. I came back to Washington and shuffled papers in this or that office. I had seen the writing on the wall for some time. I might mention that during the course of events several years previous, I had been nominated and sent to the "D" Committee for ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, but that Mission went elsewhere. I was up for Ecuador at some point. So, it's nice to have been considered.

I might say in going way back on the business with the IG, prior to that, I had been Bernie Aronson's (the assistant secretary for Latin American Affairs) accepted and agreed candidate (Bernie and I agreed and everybody else agreed) for Executive Director of the ARA Bureau, which would have been great. I could have subsequently achieved an ambassadorship. But undoubtedly, the IG talked to Aronson and that didn't happen. Aronson later on said, "Gee, we've got to get you a good job." I sent him the findings of the Personnel Grievance Staff and the Foreign Service Grievance Board, to no avail.

That was kind of the end of the career. I then went into the rainy days column the Career Transition Center, and time well spent. I learned a great deal about marketing myself for different kinds of work. All the participants in that career transition course with me were at different points in their careers. Some were in a financial hurt. Some could walk right out and into presidential positions, into professorships, and on and on and on. Some still had kids in college. Some were single parents. Some were happily looking forward to going into volunteer work. But the menu of opportunity which is out there and as described through that Career Transition Center is very important to the transition. Whether you want to go and do WAE work or whether you want to mix it, it's there and provides a marvelous opportunity.

Q: Yes, it is. It's good. But then you went back to acting, which I gather was your career before you came into the Service.

WATSON: That's right, for a very short time, and really primarily backstage.

Q: And you're enjoying that.

WATSON: Loving it. I have a wife who is very supportive of my particular ego needs, and I find it refreshing and stimulating. It keeps my mind working - it's a different kind of acting than what I did with the State Department.

Q: Doug, as we wind this up, do you have any last reflections upon the Foreign Service as a career or upon what you think young people should do these days?

WATSON: Yes, I have a couple, it was a good ride, a tremendous experience. I don't know if I said this before or not, so I'll make it brief. I think that Foreign Service people who come in through the exam process and pass the difficult examination and are quite educated in their progress en route to being able to pass the examination. They think very highly of themselves having passed the examination. This is quite misleading. There is more to Foreign Service work and life than just the examination. I have the sense that a lot of people who have succeeded in passing the entrance examination come into the Foreign Service thinking that they're really quite something. And they are, to an extent. By and large they are "educated" in the traditional academic sense of the word. But many are not nearly so well rounded in life experience as they ideally would be. There are a lot of very sharp "educated" edges that need a little real life buffing down.

Q: It's elitism.

WATSON: Yes. They're not quite as good as they think they are. I think this colors the way they relate to people in large part. I will say that elitism, which comes from the French verb "to choose" or "to elect" is a wonderful thing. There is nothing wrong with it. There are people who are better at certain things and others who just aren't as good.

I had a good career. I met a lot of very interesting people. I had myself no influence whatsoever on policy in any way I could measure. But when you work with folks like Tom Pickering, Steve Bosworth, Buz Busby, Ted McNamara, John Negroponte, Craig Johnston, or Alec Watson, to name a few - these folks make a difference. It's very important that that caliber of officer be retained and that they have the resources to do the job that we need to do.

My last observation is, it's not a very rewarding life for the non working spouse. It must be very tough on relationships now that American families almost without exception are two salary families. I think the one who deserves the credit (and I didn't mean to sell myself short) is my wife. The "formal" career successes were all mine. Her fulfillment consequently was through, in a way, a lot of my fulfillment. The university experience was for me, the Hill secondment was for me, the superior meritorious awards and presidential award were for me. They weren't in any formal sense for her. The kids I don't think "suffered" for my career, but I think that because she devoted so much to me and my success, almost by definition then her "success" for herself had to have been much less. She however wouldn't characterize our Foreign Service career this way. She would describe it more fully, and probably more succinctly than I would. This is not a counseling session, but as counselor, I would advise young people coming in to ask themselves, "What is your spouse going to do?" This is both for male spouses as well as female, although overwhelmingly female spouses. If you can pursue a freelance kind of career, then it's okay. You can write abroad, for example. You can paint.. That's fine. Now with the Internet, cable television, and this and that, life can be a little bit better, but it is rough on spouses. It is not easy.

Q: Thank you very much, Doug. This is Tom Dunnigan signing off on the discussion with Doug Watson on January 17, 2000.

End of interview